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The primary mandate of the NCF is to nurture Public Private Partnerships (PPP), to mobilise resources from the public and private sector for the restoration, conservation, protection and development of India's rich, natural, tangible and intangible heritage.

The NCF believes that two of the vital pillars of national development are the promotion of cultural diversity and heritage conservation.

The *Treasures* series brings to you objects of great aesthetic quality and historic significance from collections of major Indian museums. Each book has an introduction to the particular museum, set in broad thematic sections. Several significant treasures have been selected and presented with an introduction by the Director and staff of the museum.

This *Treasures* series is an initiative of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, in collaboration with major Indian museums, and the National Culture Fund (NCF) has been entrusted with the responsibility for its production.

The aim of the *Treasures* series is to create a lasting interest in Indian art and inspire more visitors to enjoy the wonders of India's great cultural legacy.

NATIONAL MUSEUM-New Delhi

NATIONAL CULTURE FUND

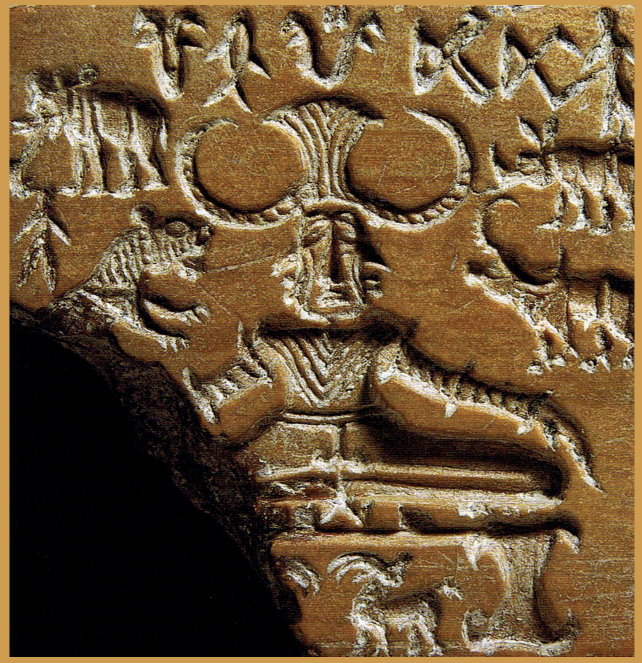
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TREASURES

NATIONAL MUSEUM NEW DELHI

NIYOGI BOOKS

NATIONAL MUSEUM
NEW DELHI



TREASURES

This volume highlights the treasures of the National Museum—New Delhi. The museum has over 2,10,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of Indian art and craftsmanship. The collection includes sculptures in stone, bronze, terracotta and wood, miniature paintings and manuscripts, coins, arms and armour, jewellery and anthropological objects. Antiquities from Central Asia and pre-Columbian artefacts form the two non-Indian collections in the museum. The museum is the custodian of this treasure trove of our multilayered history and multicultural heritage.

The collection allows Indian visitors to feel a sense of pride in their ancient culture and identity and enable visitors from other countries to appreciate India's culture and its values.

Cover Image: *Pasupati Seal*

THE TRAILS LESS
TRAVELLED

TREASURES

TREASURES

National Museum



TREASURES

NATIONAL MUSEUM
NEW DELHI

NATIONAL MUSEUM-New Delhi

NATIONAL CULTURE FUND

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संस्कृति मंत्री
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Minister of Culture
Government of India
Shastri Bhawan New Delhi-110001

MESSAGE

National treasures are unique cultural assets that are symbols of a civilisation, its history and its people. *Treasures,* of Indian Museums, is a series that reflects the aesthetic sensibility of Indian artists and their patrons, through the ages. Indian art is rooted in different philosophies. This series of museum publication aims to share this extraordinary repository with the world.

'Treasures' are objects of great aesthetic quality and historic value. In some instances an object is considered a 'treasure' in a particular museum if it is one-of-its-kind in the collection, offers an insight into Indian history or through association the object is linked to a historic personality. There are also treasures that exemplify craftsmanship in a particular medium or style of a given historic period.

Each book has an introduction to the particular museum. Set in broad thematic sections, several significant treasures have been selected by the Director and staff of the specific museum. The museum staff has provided information on the date, provenance, as well as a brief introduction to each object. The selected 'masterpiece' is represented by a photograph from which an interesting detail has been highlighted, to enable readers to fully appreciate its finer aesthetic details and understand its visual message.

This series was initiated by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India under the Museum Reforms programme. The Ministry of Culture entrusted the responsibility of the production of this series with the National Culture Fund, New Delhi. We hope that this series will initiate a lasting interest in Indian art and inspire more people, especially the younger generation, to come to Indian museums and share in India's great cultural legacy and her rich cultural heritage.

Shripad Naik



National Museum, New Delhi

INTRODUCTION TO NATIONAL MUSEUM

The National Museum is located in the heart of New Delhi, the capital of India. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, former Prime Minister of India, laid the foundation of the present building, on the 12 May 1955, and the first phase was completed by June 1960.

The conception, however, goes back to the year 1946, when the blueprint for establishing a National Museum in Delhi was prepared by the Gwyer Committee, set up by the Government of India. From 29 November 1947 to 29 February 1948, a seminal exhibition titled 'Exhibition of Indian Art' was held in Burlington House, London. The exhibition displayed selected artefacts from various museums of India and was sponsored by the Royal Academy (London) with the cooperation of the governments of India and Britain. The collection exhibited at Burlington House was later showcased in the staterooms of the *Rashtrapati Bhawan* (President's House), New Delhi from 6 November to 31 December 1948. This initiative turned out to be a great success and the event became the first step towards the creation of the National Museum.

On 15 August 1949, the Governor General of India, Shri R.C. Rajagopalachari, formally inaugurated the National Museum. Until a permanent building for the National Museum was constructed, it continued its activities from *Rashtrapati Bhawan*, New Delhi. Meanwhile, the success of the 'Exhibition of Indian Art' and the magnificence of the collection made it amply evident that it could form the foundation of the upcoming National Museum. Thus, state governments, museum authorities and private donors who participated in the exhibition were approached and the exhibits on show formed the core holdings of the National Museum.

National Museum was initially looked after by the Director General of Archaeology until the year 1957, when the Ministry of Education, Government of India, declared it a separate institution and placed it under its own direct control. At present the administration and financial control of the National Museum is under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

Today the Museum holds approximately 2,00,000 objects representative of Indian and world history. The objects cover a time span of more than 5,000

years of Indian cultural heritage. The museum has several collections related to specialised fields.

THE COLLECTION

The National Museum has the world's most representative collection of antiquities of the Harappan Civilisation—over 3500 objects that are on 'permanent loan' from the Archaeological Survey of India to the Museum.

The collection contains objects from famous sites of Harappa, Mohenjodaro and Chanhudaro. The urban Harappan Civilisation left behind valuable historic information in their painted earthen vessels, bronze items and seals. The bronze 'Dancing Girl' recovered from Mohenjo-Daro, and the toy animals are evidence of this creative, sensitive and distinctive culture that existed over 5,000 years ago.

The Department of Archaeology is among the National Museum's most prestigious departments with a collection that has a wide range of masterpieces of sculptural art in a variety of medium: stone, terracotta, stucco, bronze, gold, silver, etc., spanning a period of over two millenniums, from the 3rd century BC to the



Buddhist Gallery, National Museum

19th century AD—one of the longest in the history of world's art-heritage. There are galleries dedicated to Buddhist art, representatives from different regions, styles and schools of art of India.

Worthy of being the part of the nation's leading heritage custodians, the National Museum's collection of manuscripts is simply fabulous not merely in its volume but also in its massive breadth. It comprises over 14,000 manuscripts and texts, of which about 1000 are illustrated. Dated manuscripts, of which the collection has a good number, are of academic importance to authenticate events of history. The collection covers a period of 1400 years, from the 7th century to the 20th, and is in different medium, language, subject, and are written on parchment, birch bark, palm leaf, paper, cloth, wood, and metals. Besides the classical Sanskrit or sacred dialects like Pali, Prakrit, or Apabhransha, or trans-border languages like Persian, Arabic, Chinese, Burmese or Tibetan, the collection has manuscripts rendered in Hindi, its many dialectic forms: Rajasthani, Maithali, Oriya, Bengali, Awadhi, Brij, Marathi, Bundeli, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Gurumukhi…; using scripts like Brahmi, Devanagari, Nastaliq, Roman, Gurumukh and others. The manuscripts are



Kushana Gallery, National Museum

therefore a critical and important source of historic information, literature, from the point of view of secular and sectarian, aesthetic and scientific inquiry.

Miniature paintings, on paper, cloth, bark, wood and ivory, forms one of the National Museum's most prestigious collections, and the world's largest. There are over 17,000 paintings in the Department of Painting in the National Museum, spanning 900 years and most stylistic formats to be found in India: Pala, early Jain style, Sultanate, the indigenous styles of Malwa, Mewar, Bundelkhand, Raghogarh, Mughal, Deccani, later Rajasthani, Pahari, Sikh, Jammu, Tanjore and Mysore, and the Company School paintings.

One of the finest collections lie with the Arms Department where one can find over 6500 objects representative of Indian arms and armour covering every epoch of history; Ancient, Sultanate, Medieval, Company. Some of the weapons belonging to heroes of past, or with a rare historical context, are the other outstanding items of this collection.



Arms and Armour Gallery, National Museum

THE DECORATIVE ARTS SECTION

This represents India's age-old crafts traditions in different materials such as wood, metal, ivory, glass, ceramic, precious stones and different artistic techniques like carving, damascening, filigree, repousse, enamel, inlay among others.



Pot with Seated Monkey

This also displays 1669 coins along with five replicas of coins, five measuring vessels and some couries and ratties that were used in ancient times as weights and measures. The collection of coins in the National Museum is remarkable for its variety, rarity and antiquity. The entire history of Indian coinage, starting from about 6th century BC to the beginning of the 21st century AD, is well represented here along with the dioramas depicting various techniques of coin production. It has practically all Indian coins from the earliest bent bar, punch-marked coins to those of Indian States, British India and Post-independence coins. A study of these currencies reveals how the Indian currency system developed from cowrie shells to credit card. This collection is a rich and authentic source of information on various aspects of Indian history, it serves as a record of political and economic changes, its narrative and aesthetic impact reflect the cultural effervescence in different epochs and in various regions of the country.

The textile collection in this section belong mainly to the 17th to the 20th century yet provide glimpses of textiles traditions and trends, fashions and costumes and manufacturing techniques.

PRE-COLUMBIAN AND WESTERN ART COLLECTION

This fabulous collection was gifted to the National Museum by Mrs Alice and Mr Nasli Heeramaneck in memory of the latter's father Mr Munchersha Heeramaneck, and includes the works of art from the pre-Columbian period (pre 1492) from Central America and Latin American countries especially Peru,



Mexico and Honduras. It offers visitors to see the art of another early civilisation, before colonisation.

THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

The National Museum has in its collection about 10,000 objects, artistically conceived and related to lifestyles, socio-religious practices, conventions and beliefs of various ethnic groups and tribes. These astonishingly colourful, exotic artefacts, range from headgears, footwear, costumes, jewellery, paintings and statues pertaining to various tribes from the 'region of the seven sisters': Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, form part of the masterpieces mainly from the Elwin collection.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENT COLLECTIONS

Shri P.N. Luthra, Smt. Indira Luthra and Padmashri Smt. Sharan Rani Bakliwal, the leading sarod maestro of the country, were other donors who gifted to the Museum invaluable pieces; the Luthra family, some rare tribal art-objects, especially



those from the North East, and Smt. Bakliwal, a part of her collection of musical instruments, first in 1980, then in 1982 and 2003.

CENTRAL ASIAN ANTIQUITIES COLLECTION

Amongst the non-Indian collections, the museum's Central Asian Arts Collection is the richest, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Central Asia is geographically an enormous area that lies between Tibet and Siberia. The chain of oases provided an ideal condition for the opening of two transcontinental trade routes popularly known as the southern and northern Silk Routes from around 2nd century BC These routes connected China with parts of eastern Mediterranean and the cities of India through a number of feeder routes.

The vast and varied collection was excavated and collected by Sir Aurel Stein, the foremost amongst the archaeological explorers of the early 20th century. He collected cultural materials from more than 100 ancient cities along the ancient Silk Routes. This material gives a graphic insight into the culture, tradition, religion and beliefs of the people inhabiting this extremely difficult and inhospitable area.





HARAPPAN
CIVILISATION





MOTHER GODDESS

Terracotta figurines were found in large numbers at various sites of the Harappan Civilisation. It is generally believed that the female figurines in terracotta represents the mother goddess and suggest the prevalence of a fertility cult among the people. This large sized, handmade terracotta figurine of Mother Goddess from Mohenjodaro has a coating of thick red slip. The fan-shaped headdress is suspended on either side of the head. The figure is clad in a simple short skirt around her the waist secured by three bands, fastened in front by a medallion-like clasp. The figurine is adorned with two necklaces; the smaller one has a set of four cylindrical pendants, while the longer one hangs between the breasts. Her nose is pinched, and the eyes are depicted by two round pellets of clay.

Provenance: Mohenjodaro
Material: Terracotta
Date: 2700–2100 BC
Dimension: 23 cm x 8.5 cm
Acc. No.: D.K. 3506/260



TOY CART

It is evident from the toy-sized terracotta models of two-wheeled carts that the Indus people used cattle for surface transport on the flat alluvial plains. Almost every site of Harappan culture has produced cart models in clay and about six such types are available. This is one of them. This cart is a rectangular frame and has a pair of projections on its underside to insert the axle to connect the body with the wheels. Between the projected parts of the body another hole is seen for raising the shaft and the yoke for the bulls to pull the cart. The cart has two solid wheels each of which is endowed with a hub. This type of cart was probably used both for carrying passengers as well as commodities and farm produce from the villages to the great markets of the Harappan city.

Provenance:	Harappa
Material:	Terracotta
Date:	2700–2100 BC
Dimension:	Height: 11 cm
Acc. No.:	HR 13974/222





CART

This two wheeled miniature copper cart is open in the front and in the back, and has a gabled roof. The side walls of the cart are embossed with lozenge and cross designs. The driver is seated on a raised seat in front of the cart. This vehicle throws light on the mode of conveyance used by the Harappans and may have been one of the most advanced means of conveyance for the Harappan people, to cover short to medium distances in those times. Unfortunately, the metal is badly corroded and mutilated; however, it still conveys the power and status of the elegant carriage.

Provenance:	Harappa
Material:	Copper
Date:	2700–2100 BC
Dimension:	5 cm x 3. 5 cm x 2 cm
Acc. No.:	196/355







CLIMBING MONKEY

The Harappan potter succeeded in portraying most of the wild and domestic, birds and animals familiar to all of us. This artistically modelled representation is of a monkey climbing up a thin pole. It holds the pole in a firm grip with both hands and feet. The figurine has a hole between the joined hands and legs to allow him to move up and down along the pole. The position of arms, legs, tail and neck is portrayed very realistically. The hair on the body, face and curved backbone are shown by incised lines. The potter used some simple tools to attain this sophisticated neatly carved details. The expression of the face and the general stance are very natural and the mischievous spirit has also been captured rather well. This monkey is a wonderful example of a 5,000-year-old movable, mechanical toy for a young child.

Provenance: Harappa
Material: Terracotta
Date: 2700–2100 BC
Dimension: 6 cm x 4 cm x 4 cm
Acc. No.: 11625/216





BULL

Terracotta bull figurines are commonly found at the larger urban centres and smaller settlements of the Harappan Culture. Among the livestock, depictions of the bull on seals or figurines have always been done very artistically. This terracotta bull figurine is entirely handmade. Probably a knife may have been used to shape parts of the body and its minute details after which a thin cream slip was put over the entire figurine. A garland or plaited rope appears to have been placed around the neck of the bull. This bull has been crafted with great sensitivity, and the vigour and power of the bull, so vital to agriculture and transport, are shown with affection.

Provenance:	Mohenjodaro
Material:	Terracotta
Date:	2700–2100 BC
Dimension:	16 cm x 6 cm x 8 cm
Acc. No.:	VS 1539/234





PASUPATI SEAL

One of the most important industries of Harappa was seal cutting and there are several masterpieces of this art form to be found. Seals must have been an integral part of trade and used to mark commodities and goods for sale, and the inscription may be the name of the trader. This is the best known seal of the Harappan Culture representing a seated man wearing a prominent head gear with buffalo horns. Some scholars have identified the figure as the earliest representation of Shiva—in his form as Pasupati, Lord of animals—or the early form of a peace loving Jain Tirthankara. The seated figure in a yogic cross-legged position has arms pointing towards the earth. Beside the figure are miniatures, but very sensitive representations of animals: a buffalo, tiger, rhinoceros and an elephant.

Provenance: Mohenjodaro
Material: Terracotta
Date: 2700–2100 BC
Dimension: 3.4 cm x 3.4 cm x 1.4 cm
Acc. No.: DK 5175/143



DANCING GIRL

This figure is a remarkable achievement of the artists of this ancient culture. From this masterpiece we know that they were skilled in metallurgy and knew how to cast alloys of metals using the lost wax process. This image of a young woman—large eyes, flat nose and bunched curly hair—are all featured in an artistic way. The tilted head and flexed knees and bent right arm dramatically resting on her hip and the other hand holding a bowl suggests a dancing pose. The heavy armlets and the forearm ringed with bangles match her heavy neck ornament. Though the sculpture is only 6 inches tall, it is a work of art, as the artist has captured the youthful charm of the dancer and at the same time evoked many mysterious qualities, leaving us to wonder who she was and what her position in society was.

Provenance:	'HR' area of Mohenjodaro
Material:	Bronze
Date:	2700–2100 BC
Dimension:	10.5 cm x 5 cm x 2.5 cm
Acc. No.:	Hr. 5721/195





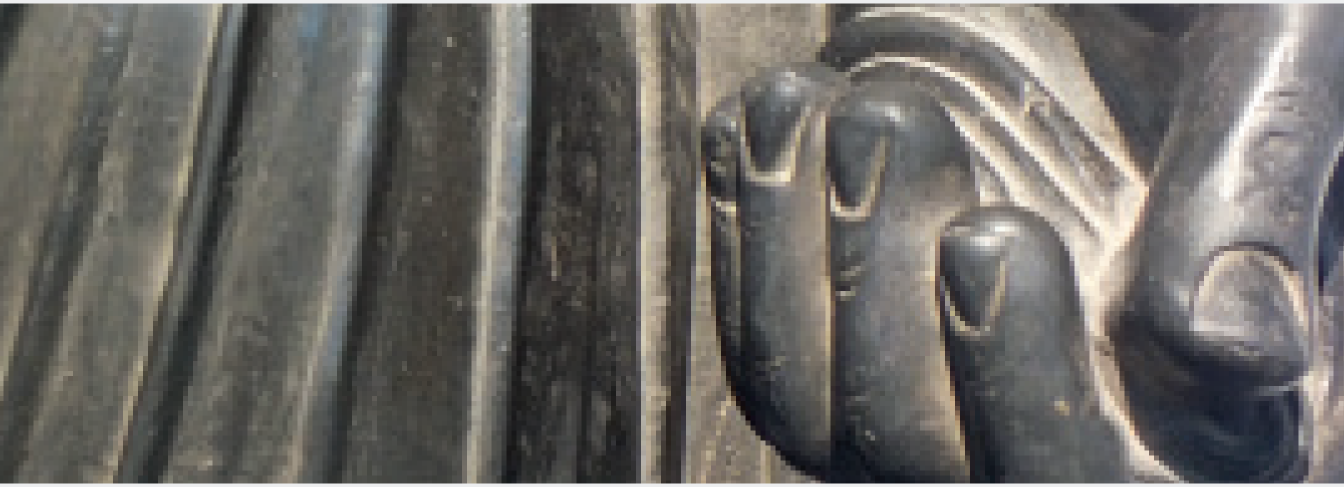


SEATED MALE FIGURINE IN YOGIC POSTURE

This is a small male figurine with bent legs extended to the front knees clasped by both arms. The two legs are joined together. Seated male is doing some yoga or physical exercise. Triangular pinched face is highly stylised with applique eyes and incised mouth.

Provenance:	Harappa
Material:	Terracotta
Date:	2700 BC
Dimensions:	6.3 cm x 4.41 cm x 4.6 cm
Acc. No.:	H.M. 2569





BUDDHIST
ART

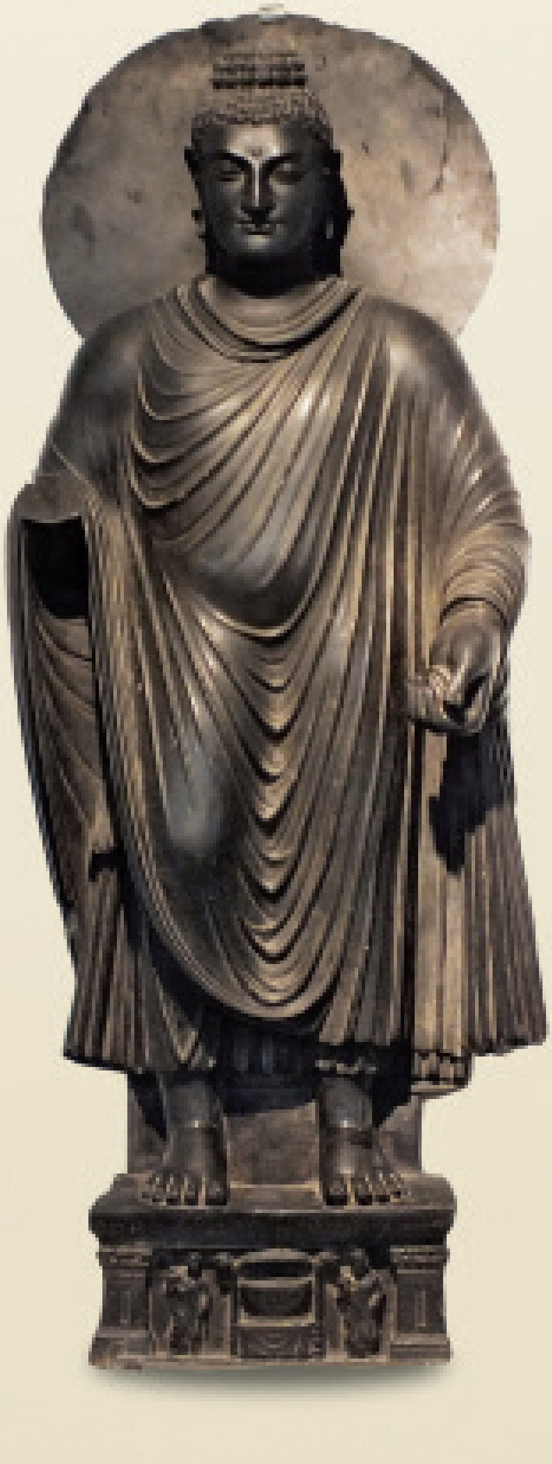
ADORATION OF STUPA

The hemispherical dome of the stupas at Nagarjunakonda, on the banks of river Krishna was covered with casing slabs like this one. Since no stupa in this region remained intact, the casing slabs from Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda depicted the elevation of the stupa with its *vedika* (platform), *anda* (hemispherical dome), *harmika* (smaller railing atop the dome) and the *chhatravalis* (umbrellas), and more importantly the *ayaka* (platforms and pillars).

Standing at the front gateway is the *Chakravartin* king, Mandhata, standing gracefully with his raised hand denoting his supremacy along with his seven jewels: queen, minister, horse, prince, wheel, elephant and a gem with all the regalia of power, devotees and garland-bearers. The gates are decorated on either side with a series of *purnaghatas* or pots of plenty and lotus roundels. Lions are shown crowning the pillars, guarding the *stupa*. Two votive *stupas* are also shown on the railing with *ayaka* pillars and the Buddha displaying the *abhaya mudra* (gesture granting assurance) with right hand and the left hand placed on the lap.

Dynasty: Ikshvaku
Provenance: Nagarjunakonda, Andhra Pradesh
Material: Pale Green Limestone
Date: 3rd century AD
Dimension: 125 cm x 93 cm x 13 cm
Acc. No.: 50.25







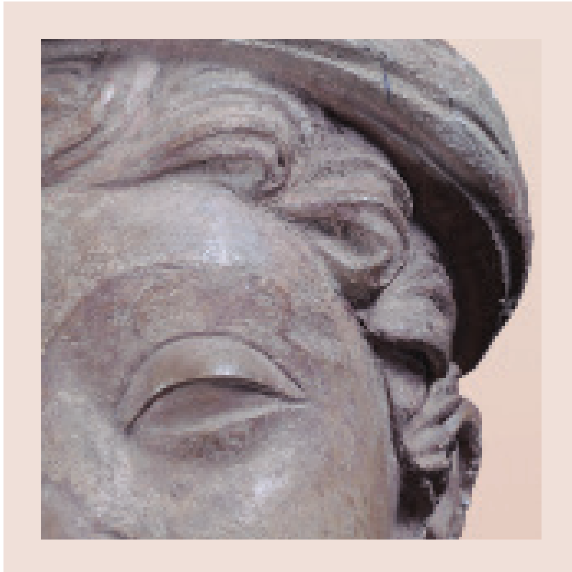
STANDING BUDDHA

The Kushan Empire encompassed large parts of north India and beyond, from the 1st to 3rd centuries AD, and the main centres of artistic activity were Gandhara and Mathura. The Gandhara School, influenced by ancient Greek iconography, aesthetic principles of realism and naturalistic portraiture, is found in this region in the Buddhist sculptural forms.

The Buddha stands on a pedestal with his right leg flexed so that the weight of body rests on his left leg. He is draped in a *sanghati* or monastic robe. The drapery with schematic folds and wavy hair recall the realism of Greco–Roman sculpture. The Buddha image displays the *ushnisha*, a hair knot like protrusion on top of his head and a large halo associated with early phase of the art of Gandhara.

Dynasty:	Kushana
Provenance:	North-western part of undivided India
Material:	Dark grey schist stone
Date:	2nd–3rd century AD
Dimension:	133 cm x 51 cm x 21 cm
Acc. No.:	87.1153





LAUGHING BOY HEAD

The Greco–Roman art that developed in the region of Gandhara in the 1st century, evolved into what John Marshall, (DG ASI, 1902–29) termed 'Late Gandhara, or Afghan Art' of the 3rd to the early 5th century AD. The Gandhara–Swat–Kapisa region lay between the Hindukush mountains and the Indus river. Its main artistic centres were at Taxila and Hadda, now in Afghanistan. Here the stupas of brick and rubble were faced with a veneer of plaster with stucco decorations (a lime based material) with figurines of the Buddha, Bodhisattvas, young men and women in theatrical poses, weeping and laughing, morose, angry and happy.

This unique small portrait head of a boy with full cheeks, wide open eyes and slightly open mouth renders a very pleasing countenance. The wavy hair is combed back, similar to other Gandharan examples. His look is innocent and is full of child-like cheerfulness.

Dynasty:	Kushana
Provenance:	North-western part of undivided India
Material:	Stucco
Date:	3rd–4th century AD
Dimension:	11 cm x 9.5 cm x 10 cm
Acc. No.:	876 jn. 16 F. 28



SCENES FROM BUDDHA'S LIFE

This stele, recovered from Sarnath depicts the major events in the life of Siddhartha who later became the Buddha. Events are arranged in a chronological fashion from the lower to the upper registers and from left to right. At the bottom left, Queen Maya Devi is shown lying on her right, on a couch surrounded by her attendants, while the elephant, *Shveta Ketu* is shown descending to enter into her womb. To the extreme right of this register, Maya Devi holds a branch of the *shala* tree while the new born Siddhartha emerges from her right side. In the centre of the lower register, the child Siddhartha is shown as being given his first bath by two *Nagas*, while he displays his right hand in the *abhaya mudra* (gesture of assurance). The middle register shows the young Siddhartha riding on his horse, Kanthaka, evidently from the palace.

This event is commonly known as the 'Great Departure'. In the centre of the middle register, Siddhartha is shown cutting his hair to become an ascetic. At the right, he is shown seated cross-legged in meditation that led to his enlightenment. The proportion in which this event has been depicted emphasises its importance, followed by the scene of his victory over Mara and the first preaching at the Deer Park in Sarnath in the upper register. The fourth register which is missing may have depicted his death or *Maha-parinirvana*. On the basis of similar works, this stele can be dated to the third quarter of the 5th century AD.

Dynasty:	Gupta
Provenance:	Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh
Material:	Chunar sandstone
Date:	5th century AD
Dimension:	Height: 105 cm; Width: 49 cm; Depth: 11.5 cm
Acc. No.:	49.114



BUDDHA HEAD

This magnificent sculpture, made in soft and smooth buff colored Chunar sandstone, presents all the hallmarks of the classical idiom of Indian art that developed during the Gupta period (4th–6th century AD). This Buddha head is depicted with graceful features; an oval face; flat, long cheeks; thick , full lips; a sharp nose; half-closed eyes; elongated earlobes, and the curls of his hair depicted in a snail-like form, with the *usnisa* (hair knot) at the top. The half-closed eyes indicate that the Buddha is in deep contemplation.

Aesthetically, this image combines *drishti* (the highest vision), with *rupa* (perfect form), *bhava* (emotion), *lavanya* (grace and charm) and likeness to *sadrishya* (the ideal). This style was to influence all subsequent artistic development throughout northern India.

Dynasty:	Gupta
Provenance:	Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh
Material:	Buff Chunar sandstone
Date:	5th century AD
Dimension:	26.6 cm x 16.2 cm x 21 cm
Acc. No.:	47.20





STANDING BUDDHA

Pala art flourished in Nalanda, a prosperous town with a renowned monastic university that attracted student-scholars from China to South-East Asia. A great number of metal images, for the *Mahayana* and *Tantrayana* sects of Buddhist faith were cast during this period. The smaller images were used by the monks in their cells for personal worship or bought by pilgrims as souvenirs to worship at home.

The Buddha gracefully stands on a circular double lotus pedestal. His right hand is in *abhaya mudra,* the gesture granting freedom from fear. His left hand holds the end of his monastic robe, displaying the *varada mudra*, conveying the boon granting gesture. The monastic robe is worn over both shoulders and falls gracefully outlining the body contours. The Buddha has sharp features and his semi-closed eyes are inlaid with silver.

Dynasty:	Pala
Provenance:	Nalanda, Bihar
Material:	Bronze
Date:	10th century AD
Dimension:	27.8 cm x 8.8 cm x 6.8 cm
Acc. No.:	47.47







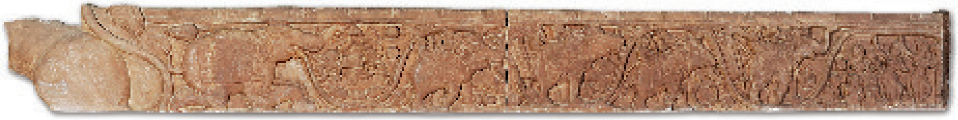
STANDING BUDDHA

This is one of the finest bronzes from a hoard of seven images discovered in 1964 in Phophnar Kala village, near Burhanpur in Madhya Pradesh. Buddha was standing in the centre of a lotus flower (the lotus is now missing) rising out of a rectangular pedestal carved with an open work floral pattern. His right hand is in the *abhaya mudra* (protection pose) while his left hand holds the *ekansika sanghati,* hem of his outer garment that covers his left shoulder. The image has features characteristic of Gupta art: an oval face, half closed eyes inlaid with silver while the pupils are painted black, elongated ears, tight shell-like curls and long flowing drapery.

The image bears an inscription on the pedestal translated by Venkataramayya (1964) as, 'This is the meritorious gift of Bhadanta Buddhadasa, the Sakya bhiksukacayva. Let the merit of (this) gift go to all sentient beings.'

Dynasty:	Gupta-Vakataka
Provenance:	Phophnar, Madhya Pradesh
Material:	Bronze
Date:	5th century AD
Dimension:	45.5 cm x 17 cm x 13.8 cm
Acc. No.:	L. 658





ELEPHANTS CARRYING BUDDHA'S RELICS

This railing stone represents the last episode of the Buddha's life. According to *Mahaparinirvana Sutta*, just after the death of the Buddha, the 8 ruling clans of eastern India claimed his remains on grounds of kinship. To avoid war, Drona, a wise Brahmin suggested that the Buddha's relics be equally distributed amongst all the eight clans. The offer was accepted and the sacred relics were divided and transported by the kings, amidst great pomp, to their various kingdoms, where *stupas* were built to enshrine them. This frieze represents a royal procession with four caparisoned elephants, with the kings balancing the reliquary caskets, while driving the elephants with the goad. The railing design ends with a kneeling elephant yielding the lotus stem, known as '*Kalpavalli*' or 'wish-fulfilling stem', that turns into beautiful jewelry.

The procession starts with dancers accompanied by female musicians playing on drums, castanets, and a harp. According to textual references, the *Mallas* celebrated the death of Buddha with dance and music, as he died at the age of eighty. Even today in India, the funeral procession of the elderly is accompanied with flowers and music.

Dynasty:	Sunga
Provenance:	Bharhut, Madhya Pradesh
Material:	Red sandstone
Date:	2nd century BC
Dimension:	28.5 cm x 266 cm x 9 cm
Acc. No.:	68.168



SACRED RELICS FROM KAPILAVASTU

An inscribed casket was unearthed in the mound at Piprahwa in 1898 at a *stupa* site that led to the identification of this site as the ancient Kapilavastu. The inscription on the lid (now in the Indian Museum, Kolkata) refers to the relics of the Buddha and his community—the Shakya.

Further excavation of the *stupa* by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1971–77, revealed three stages of construction, two un-inscribed steatite relic caskets containing a total of 22 sacred bone relics believed to be of Lord Buddha.

This site also led to the discovery of more than 40 terracotta seals from the eastern monastery. The inscription in Brahmi, which reads: 'a community of Buddhist monks of Kapilavastu living in Devaputra Vihara and Maha Kapilavastu Bhikshu Sanghasa', of 1st and 2nd century AD, provides evidence to establish that Piprahwa wasindeed the ancient Kapilavastu, the birthplace of the Buddha.

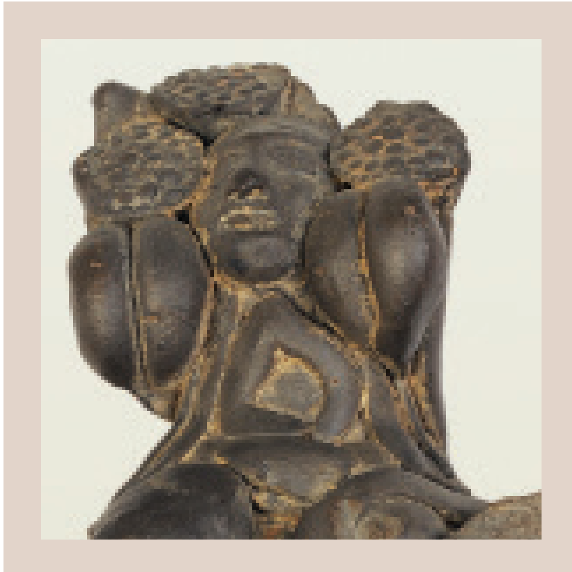
Provenance: Piprahwa, Uttar Pradesh
Material: Spotted red sandstone
Date: 5th–4th century BC
Acc. No.: Sl. No. 115 and 116


19



ARCHAEOLOGY





MOTHER GODDESS

The two prolific phases of terracotta production in India were associated with two periods of urbanisations: first, the Harappan Civilisation (2600 to 2000 BC) and then in the Mauryan period (324 to 187 BC) in Mathura, Kaushambi, Pataliputra and other ancient cities of the Gangetic Plains.

The cult was prevalent through the centuries as the Mother Goddess represented the giver and sustainer of life. This outstanding early terracotta figurine is made in grey ware. She is seated on a round wicker-stool. The figure is bold, self-assured and she holds a child in her lap. The face is made with a mould but all other parts including the ornaments are hand modelled and appliquéd or modelled in clay and stuck on to the figure. Her headdress is decorated with a series of floral discs in the Mauryan–Shungan style. She wears heavy coiled earrings and her skirt is decorated with punch circlets.

Dynasty:	Mauryan
Provenance:	Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
Material:	Terracotta
Date:	3rd century BC
Dimension:	Height: 18.3 cm
Acc. No.:	60.291



GANGA

Ganga and Yamuna, the two sacred rivers of northern India are represented as goddesses in several Hindu temples, in the Gupta period. This life-size image of terracotta Ganga is from a Shaivite temple in Ahichchhatra, Uttar Pradesh. In the *Gangavatarana* legend King Bhagiratha caused the Ganga to descend to the earth with his severe penance. Lord Shiva was forced to intervene and checked her forceful flow as she got lost in his '*jatas*' or deadlocks, before touching the earth.Ganga symbolises purification, and fertility and is represented as a bejewelled, young goddess, standing on her vehicle, a *makara* (crocodile), symbolising untamed energy. The Goddess wears an upper garment that covers her breasts, a tight skirt that clings to her body and is fastened at the waist by a girdle. She holds a *kalasa* (water pot) with the sacred waters. The graceful posture and modest ornamentation reflect the creativity and technical refinement of Indian terracotta art in the late Gupta period.

Dynasty:	Gupta
Provenance:	Ahichchhatra, Uttar Pradesh.
Material:	Terracotta
Date:	5th century AD
Dimension:	172 cm x 74 cm x 40 cm
Acc. No.:	L.2b.89





VISHNU

This impressive Vishnu depicts the deity as four-armed, wearing a *kiritamukuta* (jewelled crown), the *yajnopavita* (sacred thread), with fastenings at the left shoulder and the waist, and a long garland made of *vanamala* (wild flowers).

The artist has depicted two necklaces: one of twisted pearl strands and the other of graduated beads, the *keyuras* (armbands), and the pleated short lower garment, secured at the waist in stone in the most sensitive manner.

When complete this image must have had a large, *prabhavali* (halo). The depiction of arched eyebrows, gently lowered eyes, full lips, half closed eyes, rounded chin and the *trivalayas* or three conventional folds around the neck are all characteristic of the 5th century AD monumental images of Vishnu of the Gupta period that display great aesthetic excellence.

Dynasty:	Gupta
Provenance:	Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
Material:	Red sandstone
Date:	Mid 5th century AD
Dimension:	109 cm x 67 cm x 22 cm
Acc. No.:	E. 6





LAKSMANA DISFIGURING SURPANAKHA

This panel, from the basement of the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh, depicts a scene from the Ramayana. According to the legend, while in the forest, Surpanakha the *rakshasi*, Ravana's sister, falls in love with Rama, who resists her advances, saying that he was married and that Laksmana might wish to have a wife. Laksmana, also spurns her and suspecting that he too is in love Surpanakha attacks and tries to swallow Sita. Laksmana captures the *rakshasi*, and cuts off her nose, ears and breasts.

In this sculpture a forest scene is depicted with trees and creepers. To the left of the panel, Laksmana holds Surpanakha by her hair and in his raised right hand, he holds a sword to cut off her ears, nose and breasts.

The elongated torso of the male figures and the plump well-defined bodies of the females with notable coiffure are distinctive features of Gupta art.

Dynasty:	Gupta
Provenance:	Deogarh, Uttar Pradesh
Material:	Sandstone
Date:	6th century AD
Dimension:	80 cm x 88 cm x 26 cm
Acc. No.:	51.178





SRI LAKSHMI

This early representation of Sri Lakshmi is unique in concept and delicate in form. This goddess of prosperity and fertility is standing on two lotuses emerging out of a *purnaghata*, or pot of plenty, an auspicious symbol of purity and prosperity.

Her right hand rests on her girdle just below the navel, and holds a twig with leaves, another symbol of life and fertility. Her hair is arranged and tied behind her head in a heavy spiral loop. She is dressed in a transparent garment with a scarf tied with a belt. She is profusely adorned with ornaments; including a hair ornament, heavy ear pendants, flat torque, a long bead necklace, plenty of bangles, armlets and heavy anklets. Peacocks perched over a leaf/branch in the centre of the decorative motif on the armlets of the goddess. The smile on the face adds charm to the inherent beauty of the image.

Dynasty: Kushana
Provenance: Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
Material: Red sandstone
Date: 1st century AD
Dimension: 123 cm x 28 cm x 25 cm
Acc. No.: B.89







SURYA

This is one of the finest sculptures from the Sun temple of Konarak and may have once been installed for worship in the sanctum. Surya, is depicted standing, holding full-blown lotuses in both hands, riding a chariot driven by charioteer Aruna, drawn by seven galloping horses. The deity is flanked by attendant figures: Danda and Pingala on either side or his consorts, Chhaya (Shadow) and Suvarchasa on the other. The figure is surrounded by a decorative arch that adds beauty to the image. Surya is the source of light, warmth, life and knowledge, and is the solar deity from the early period of the *Rigveda.* Before the 5th century, the solar cult was strongly influenced by the Zoroastrian cult of Iran and Surya was dressed in tunic, girdle and high boots, with a dagger in his hand, and only four horses drew his chariot. It was only from the Gupta period onwards that the Surya images were 'Indianised' as we see in this image.

Dynasty:	Eastern Ganga
Provenance:	Konarak, Orissa
Material:	Stone
Date:	13th century AD
Dimension:	189.2 cm x 89 cm x 40.5 cm
Acc. No.:	50.178

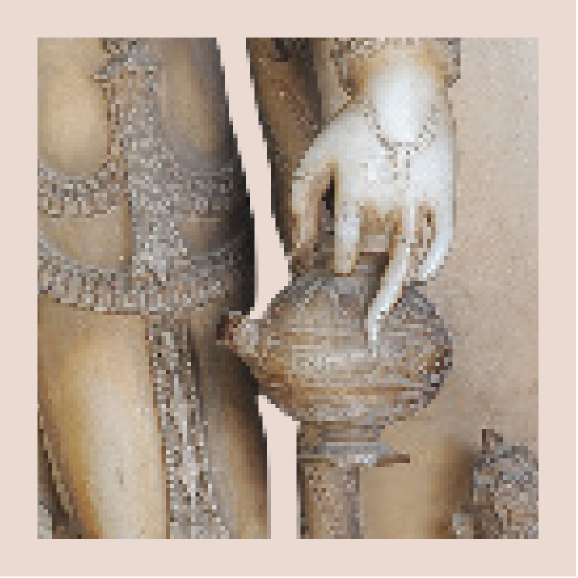




ALASAKANYA

This typical Chandella stone image presents a young charming female, *Alasakanya*, carved in high relief standing against a pillar. She is trying to hold the hem of her falling transparent *dhoti*, revealing the voluptuousness of her breasts and thighs in the most delicate manner. Her expression is bashful. The other figure in this sculpture is probably trying to undress her. A hand is visible near her right thigh. Her *uttariya*, or upper garment falls in waves along her back, while in front, it is falling and revealing her breasts. Her hair is combed back and tied into a coiffure on the neck. The rolling contours of her body create a very delicate sensuous feeling. The portraiture of such charming females and nymphs in Chandella art is unparalleled in the realm of Indian art.

Dynasty:	Chandella
Provenance:	Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh
Material:	Stone
Date:	12th century AD
Dimension:	91 cm x 18 cm x 26 cm
Acc. No.:	75.430



SARASWATI

This sophisticated and delicate sculpture in white marble represents goddess Sarasvati, as Vagdevi of the Jain pantheon. Four-armed Sarasvati, stands on a lotus pedestal, holding a lotus, a book, a rosary and a vase in her hands. The lower right hand displays the *varada mudra.* She is bedecked with minutely carved ornaments; her limbs appear soft and her fingers animated with their sharp, pointed nails.

Sarasvati, the goddess of learning, music, eloquence and intelligence is from the Brahmanical pantheon where she is considered the consort/*shakti* of Brahma. Later she was regarded as one of the consorts of Vishnu. In some texts she is described as a goddess with white complexion, dressed in white, carrying a pen, manuscript, lotus, rosary, *veena* and a vessel. Saraswati was assimilated in Buddhist and in later periods into the Jain pantheon, where she heads the collective body of 16 Vidyadevis, the 16 branches of knowledge.

Dynasty:	Chauhan
Provenance:	Pallu, Rajasthan
Material:	Stone
Date:	12th century AD
Dimension:	77 cm x 46 cm x 22 cm
Acc. No.:	1-6/278







NEMINATHA

Jina images may appear identical, but the Jain *lanchana* or iconographic codes allow for their identification. This clothed image of the *Shvetambara* (white clad) sect with the signature conch-shell *lanchana* found at the centre of the base, can be identified as Neminatha, the 22nd *Jina*. The term *'nemi'* means 'wheel-rim'.

This standing, highly polished image of Neminatha has an auspicious *shrivatsa* symbol on his chest. There is a wealth of fine detail in this image, such as the bifurcated lips, the decorative border of his fine cloth wrap, and the gracefully attenuated fingers. Two flywhisk bearers (among the eight chief attendants of a *Jina*) stand beside Neminatha's legs along with other smaller figures of the male and female donors, who are kneeling in reverence.

Dynasty:	Chahamana
Provenance:	Narhad, Rajasthan
Material:	Stone
Date:	12th century AD
Dimension:	119 cm x 37 cm x 22 cm
Acc. No.:	69.132



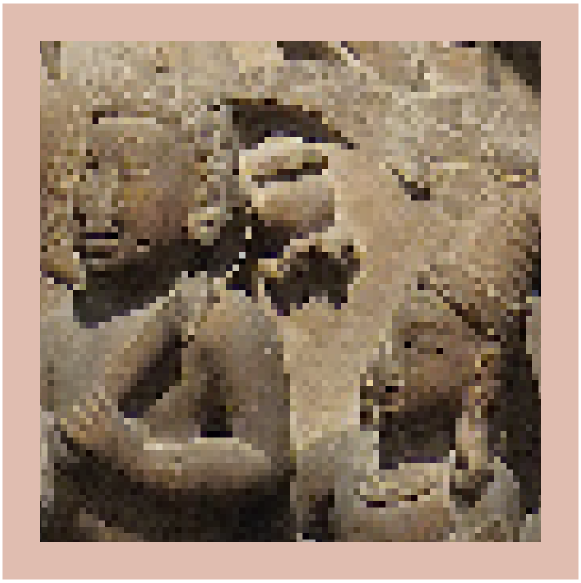
SHIVA VAMANA

This unusual representation of Shiva is derived from the epithets of *Hrasvaya* and *Vamanaya* used in *Satarudriya* text. The sculpture of the four armed Shiva as *Vamana (*a plump dwarf) is shown with bulging belly, heavy limbs, large nose, lips and a short statured body.

He is seated on a cushion against a large round decorated pillow. In a jovial mood he is seen holding flowers, a rosary and the stalk of a lotus in three hands and the fourth is placed on his knee in a natural posture. The jewellery consists of snake-like anklet and a thick twisted strand of large pearls. The necklace has an elaborate pendant suspended from a string of circular plaques; a large, circular earring rests on the shoulder. Besides the ornaments, he is adorned with a snake, and his hair (usually matted locks or *jata mukuta)* hangs in curls on right side. The ringlets of the left varies from the usual form.

Dynasty:	Gupta-Vakataka
Provenance:	Mansar, Maharashtra
Material:	Stone
Date:	5th century AD
Dimension:	85 cm x 63 cm x 38 cm
Acc. No.:	L. 77/2





TRIVIKRAMA

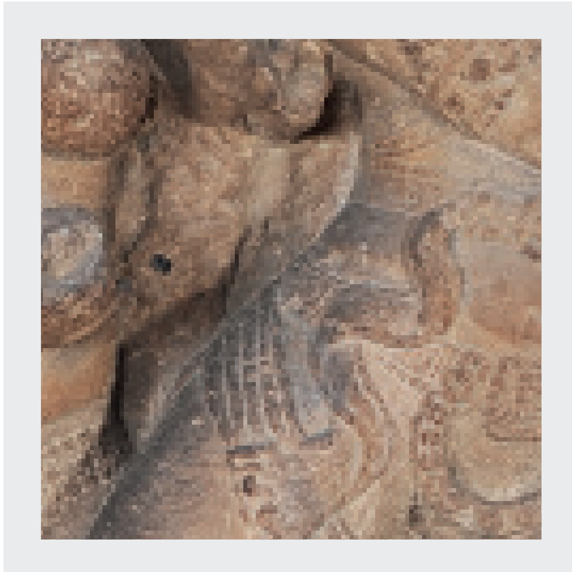
It is said that the demon king Mahabali of South was a very benevolent and kind ruler. His popularity caused the gods to become apprehensive. So they approached Vishnu asking him to do something. Vishnu took the form of a *vamana* (dwarf) and approached Mahabali asking him three measures of land to sit and pray. Mahabali agreed immediately to give Vamana the land equivalent to three of his steps.

Astonishingly Vamana took the form of a large deity (Vishvarupa) and covered the whole earth with one step. With the second step he covered the heavens. He had no place to put the third step so he asked Mahabali again. Mahabali realised that he had been tricked but being true to his word, he allowed Vamana to place the third step on his head pushing him down to the *Paatala lok*. Vamana is known as Trivikrama as he takes over three worlds. The image depicts Trivikrama with one of his feet covering the earth and the other reaching for the heavens.

Dynasty: Pratihara
Provenance: Kashipur, Uttar Pradesh
Material: Sandstone
Date: 11th century CE
Dimension: 142 cm x 66 cm; Diametre: 24 cm
Acc. No.: L.143







FLYING CELESTIALS

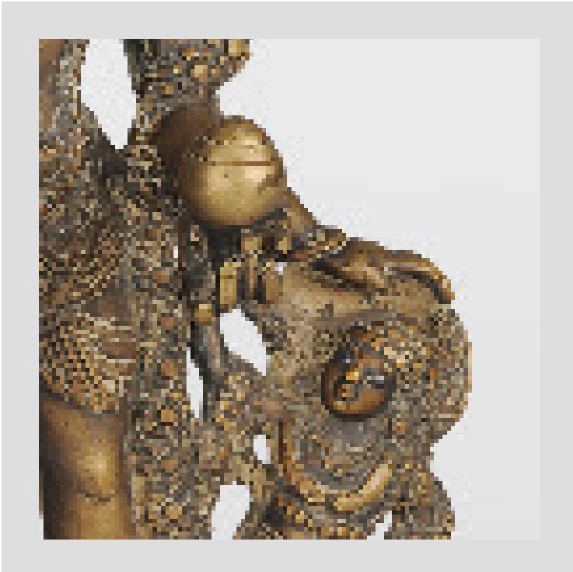
In the Deccan, over 100 temples were built during the 7th and 8th century within the early western Chalukyan empire. Few of these temples are Jain in affiliation and the rest Hindu. They reflect the religious leanings of the different emperors. This is one of the rare Chalukyan temple ceilings in the collection and was chosen as the logo of the National Museum. The ceiling slab depicts a flying celestial couple. This graceful representation of the couple show their legs, limbs bent at the knees as if flying without the aid of wings. The male figure is clad in a short lower garment and the female is draped in a *sari.* The soft, fluttering garments and depiction of clouds suggest skyward movement.

Dynasty: Early Western Chalukya
Provenance: Aihole, Karnataka
Material: Sandstone
Date: 7th century AD
Dimension: 135 cm x 109 cm x 23 cm
Acc. No.: L.55.22





BRONZES



VISHNU VAIKUNTHA

This ornate bronze Vishnu Vaikuntha is from the Kashmir Valley. The four-headed Vishnu stands in *tribhanga* pose on a rectangular pedestal, flanked by Gada Devi to the right and Chakrapurusa to the left, both bearing flywhisks. Vishnu places a hand upon their heads and his other set of hands holds the lotus and conch. A tiny image of Goddess Earth is portrayed between Vishnu's feet.

The four heads of Vishnu are: human in the front, a lion and boar on the sides and a ferocious being at the back. Braided hair locks spread over the shoulders, while the rest of the hair is piled on top of the head and adorned with a crown. The *dhoti* seems to be tied around the thighs in a very stylistic manner. The flower garland that surrounds the image is a typical feature of the art of Kashmir. The pedestal is provided with a spout to drain off fluids poured ritually over the image.

Provenance:	Kashmir
Material:	Bronze
Date:	9th century AD
Dimension:	39.0 cm x 19.0 cm x 12.0 cm
Acc. No.:	80.1210





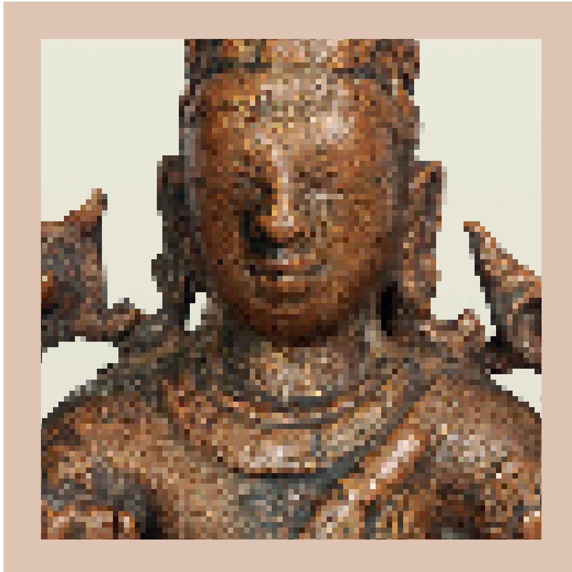


NATARAJA

Nataraja, the Lord of Dance, represents the essential aspects of Shiva; creation, preservation, destruction, and grace. The dance he performs is the dance of bliss or *ananda tandava*. In this image Nataraja has four arms; the rear right hand carries the *damaru* or drum, symbolic of the primeval sound of creation and the left holds a flame of fire, symbol of destruction. The front right hand is in *abhaya mudra* symbolising protection and the rear left arm crosses his chest to the right and the fingers point to his feet, where Shiva tramples the dwarf demon Apasmarapurusha, or ignorance. The left leg is raised diagonally with the foot in air, denoting the path of salvation. The image of Shiva is encircled by a *prabhamandala*, like a circle of light. The matted locks of Shiva are adorned with the perching figure of river goddess s Ganga, a snake, jewels, flowers, a crescent moon and a human skull.

Dynasty:	Chola
Provenance:	Tamil Nadu
Material:	Bronze
Date:	12th century AD
Dimension:	96 cm x 82.8 cm x 28.2 cm
Acc. No.:	56.2/1





STANDING VISHNU

This hallmark of early Pallava art is a magnificent bronze image of four-armed Vishnu (the preserver god). He carries a *chakra* (discus) and *sankha* (conch) in the upper hands. The lower right hand is in *abhaya mudra* (gesture offering assurance) and the lower left is in *katyavalambita* (arm resting on the hip). He wears a *kirita mukuta* (jewelled crown), necklace, *yajnopavita* (sacred thread), *udarabandha* (girdle around the abdomen), wristlets, earrings and the lower garment is secured with a girdle. A sash is tied around the waist with its knots on either side, the *siras chakra* (the head wheel), is fixed behind the head. The distinctive sculptural art of the Pallavas is believed to have commenced during the reign of Mahendravarman (AD 590–630). In this tiny, but powerful bronze are seen the distinctive features of this period; well-modelled slim bodies, dignified ovoid face, tall headgear and a broad waist-girdle loop.

Dynasty:	Pallava
Provenance:	South India
Material:	Bronze
Date:	9th century AD
Dimension:	21.7 cm x 9 cm x 4 cm
Acc. No.:	66.2





KALIYA-MARDAN KRISHNA

This is an elegant bronze image of Krishna dancing on the serpent-hood of Kaliyanaga. It represents the story of how Krishna learnt that the village cattle were being poisoned when they drank from the waters of the Kalindi river. Being the protector of the cowherd community, the young Krishna finds the culprit is the proud Kaliyanaga or serpent demon. Krishna jumps into the water to subjugate the giant serpent, dancing on his hood till the serpent repents and begs for forgiveness. In this sculpture Krishna's right hand is in *abhaya mudra* (the gesture of protection) to all, while with the left hand he is triumphantly holding the tail of the snake and the five-hooded Kaliyanaga has his hands held in *anjali mudra,* (the gesture of respect and worship). The pedestal has four holes on each corner indicating that is was a movable image made to be carried in temple processions.

Dynasty: Early Chola
Provenance: South India
Material: Bronze
Date: 10th century AD
Dimension: 59 cm x 23 cm x 16 cm
Acc. No.: 70.11



SIVA—TRIPURANTAKA

This is an exquisite bronze image of Siva—Tripurantaka. He is standing firmly on a double lotus pedestal, on his taut right leg while the left leg is bent at the knee. The arms indicate that he is holding a bow. His hair is arranged in a high *jata mukuta* and he is shown with customary jewellery. The sculpture is finely modelled and well proportioned and an excellent example of early Chola art.

Shiva in Tripurantaka form is presented in a warrior pose, riding a chariot, of which the four Vedas are the horses, and Brahma the charioteer. Shiva is shown ready to shoot an arrow to destroy the impregnable three cities of the demons, releasing them from the bondage of ignorance into immortality. This theme was popular in Pallava and Chola stone sculptures and the National Museum has a few examples.

Dynasty:	Early Chola
Provenance:	South India
Material:	Bronze
Date:	9th century AD
Dimension:	97.5 cm x 37.5 cm x 29 cm
Acc. No.:	82.223







BHARATA WITH RAMA'S SANDALS

This is the unique image of Bharata with his hands raised to support the sandals of his brother Rama, placed on a cushion, on his head. He wears a necklace, bracelets and the lower garment is secured at the waist with an ornamental floral clasp with ribbons. The upbraided matted locks of hair are descending at the back in a loose fashion.

This is an unparalleled representation of the devotion of Bharata, the prince of Ayodhya, for his elder brother Rama. Rama, the heir apparent, who was exiled from the palace, as recounted in the epic *Ramayana.* During Rama's exile his brother Bharata was appointed king, but in deference to his brother the real king, he carried the sandals of the elder brother on his head as a mark of devotion.

Dynasty: Vijayanagara
Provenance: South India
Material: Bronze
Period: 14th century AD
Dimension: 75.5 cm x 31 cm x 22.3 cm
Acc. No.: 69.49



SVACHCHHANDA BHAIRAVI

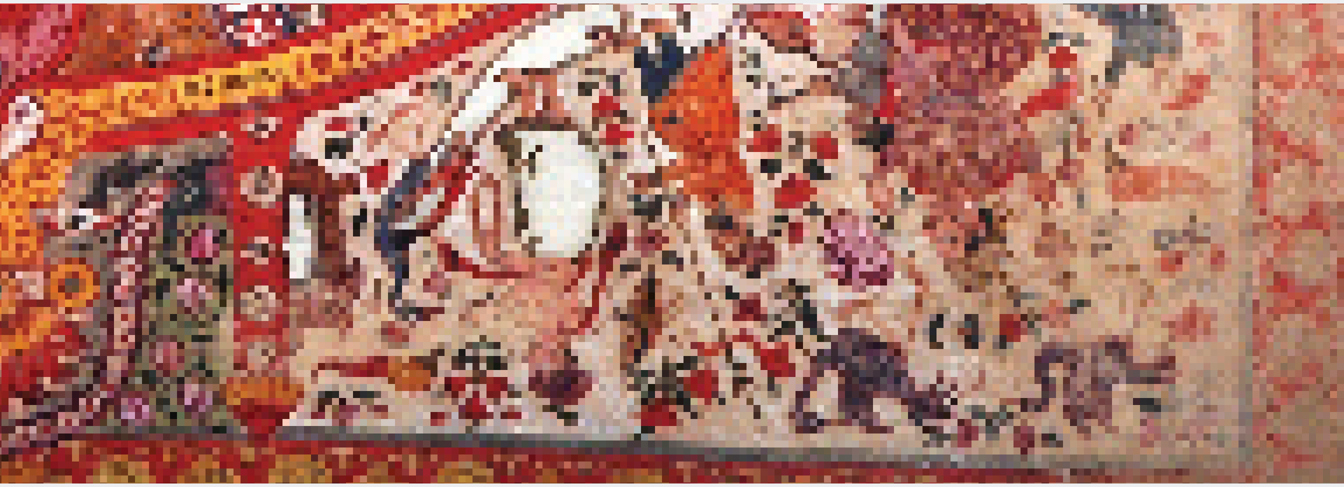
This is the unique bronze image of the five-headed and ten-armed Devi Svachchhanda Bhairavi from Chamba in Himachal Pradesh. She is seated in *lalitasana* on the shoulders of a four-armed male figure, identified as Shiva. Four heads of Devi face the four cardinal directions and the fifth is placed on top. In her right hands, she holds a sword, lotus, trident and skull while in the left hands she holds a goad, noose, manuscript and *purnaghata* or pot of plenty. An aureole of flames encompasses the figures.

This is a very fine example of the early medieval art of Himalyan region. Dr B.C. Chhabra identifies this bronze as Svachchhanda Bhairavi, while Dr Sivaramamurti considers it as the female counterpart of Sadashiva, and Dr P. Pal suggests it is a representation of Mahabhairavi. The undeciphered inscription on the pedestal in Sarada characters places it in 1000 AD.

Dynasty: Utpala
Provenance: Chamba, Himachal Pradesh
Material: Bronze
Date: 10th century AD
Dimension: 37.0 cm x 24.0 cm x 7.0 cm
Acc. No.: 64.102







PAINTINGS
AND MANUSCRIPTS





ASHTASAHASRIKA PRAJNAPARAMITA

The Asthasahasrika comprises 8,000 units, each with 32 syllables. Its *shlokas* are written in the form of a dialogue between Buddha and two of his disciples, Shariputra and Subhuti, with the latter posing questions and the former answering them. The six *paramitas* in Mahayana Buddhism to attain supreme knowledge, and for a bodhisattva to attain buddhattva are: charity, character, tolerance, heroism, meditation and wisdom. The Asthasahasrika Prajnaparamita (*prajna* referring to 'supreme knowledge' and *paramita* to 'fullness') is an essential Mahayana rite, to be observed by a bodhisattva.The illustrations in the manuscripts are from the life of the Gautama Buddha. These paintings with warm reds and greens impart a muted glow to the manuscript are fine examples of the Pala tradition of the 12th century AD. The illustrations are similar in style to mural paintings and reflect Central Asian accents, with images of Avalokiteshwara, green Tara and other minor deities.

Provenance:	Sanskrit
Script:	Newari (Ranjana)
Materi al:	Palm Leaf
Date:	12th century AD
Dimension:	33.2 cm × 9 cm
Acc. No.:	51.212

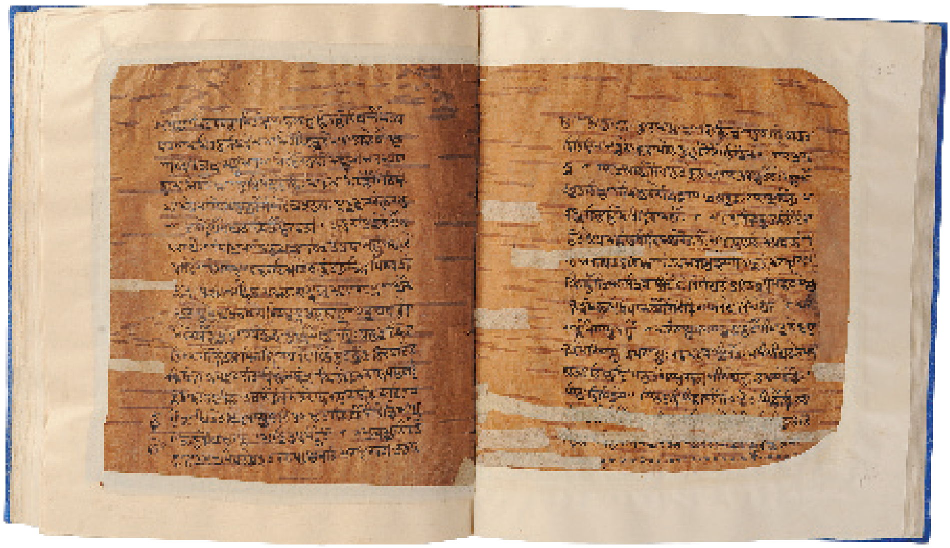




BABURNAMA

In the *Baburnama* there is a description of the gardens around Kabul and villages that grow grapes: 'Few villages match Istalif with vineyards and fine orchards...I took over the great garden, of Aulugh Baig Mirza after paying a price to its owners…one with trees on both bank of a stream that flows through the middle of the garden; formerly its course was zig-zag and irregular; I have made it straight and orderly; so the place has become very beautiful.' In this painting, Babur is seen holding a hawk and standing near the reservoir that he constructed. In the background stands his tent, to the top right hand corner is a dancing peacock, being admired by a pair of pea-hens. In the foreground, a greyhound drinks water from the stream. This painting records Babur's love for formal gardens, and the origin of India's great heritage of Mughal gardens.

Provenance:	Persian
Script:	Nastaliq
Material:	Paper
Date:	AD 1598
Dimension:	26 cm × 17 cm
Acc. No.:	50.336



BALABODHINI

Balabodhini, was authored by the celebrated Kashmiri Pandit, Jagaddhara Bhatta and is of seminal importance as a text of Sanskrit grammar. *Balabodhini* forms a crucial commentary on the Katantra School of Sanskrit grammar and philology that flourished in Kashmir from the 2nd century AD. The term '*katantra*' corresponds to *Ishat tantra* or a brief work, the author's intention probably being to simplify Panini's grammar. Bengal too was a centre for this school of Sanskrit grammar, after the 12th century.

The text has no illustrations and is written in Sharada script, with pen and black ink on birch-bark, the inner bark of the common birch (*bhoja-patra* or *bhurja* in their native Himalayan region) was used prolifically by the Hindu Kashmiri as their writing material till the 18th century.

Provenance:	Sanskrit
Script:	Sharada
Material:	Birch-bark manuscript
Date:	12th century AD
Dimension:	28 cm × 23 cm
Acc. No.:	76.726/2



GITA GOVINDA OF JAYADEVA

Fourteen palm-leaves have been stitched together to open like a hanging and contain Jayadeva's great lyrical poem to Krishna—the 'Love song of the Dark Lord' or *Gita Govinda*. Radha commands her divine lover to paint a leaf on her breasts, 'put colour on my cheeks/lay a girdle on my hips/twine my heavy braid with flowers/fix rows of bangles on my hands/ and put jewelled anklets on my feet!' with all doubts resolved, an eager Krishna, 'does what Radha asks'. There is a central image on this 'hanging'. Below an open 16-petalled lotus stands the image of the Jagannath or Krishna, 'Lord of the World', with Balabhadra, his brother, and Subhadra, the sister, the presiding deities of Jagannath Puri Temple in Odisha. The text is so artfully written, so that the arrangement of words creates the outline of the Jagannath Puri temple facade. At the top of the temple spire are sculpted lions and peacocks and a flag fluttering in the wind, these forms are filled with minutely written Sanskrit verses.

Provenance:	Sanskrit
Script:	Oriya
Material:	Palm leaf; 14 folios in accordion format
Date:	18th century AD
Dimension:	5.6 cm × 26.5 cm
Acc. No.:	57.46





JAIN KALPASUTRA

This is an illustrated copy of the most revered Jain manuscript of Bhadrabahu, and is a sumptuous specimen of the best-known illustrated Kalpasutras on paper. Folios of the manuscript are filled with dazzling design, both in the writing of the text and in the illustrated panels: borders filled with little figures against backgrounds of rich and varying hues, elegantly written lines, alternating from gold to silver; figurative panels with meticulous details of textiles and objects and scared symbols. In this painting is the illustration of the scene of the birth of Mahavira, the last of the 24 Tirthankaras.

Jainism one of the three major religions of early India and derives its name from the word *Jina* meaning 'liberator'. The Jain faith believes that suffering ends when this cycle of life and death is broken and the *jiva* (soul) obtains *Kaivalya* or liberation. The 24 *Jinas* or *Tirthankaras* help us to obtain this state of liberation.

Provenance:	Prakrit
Script:	Devanagari
Material:	Paper
Date:	15th century AD
Dimension:	12 cm × 30 cm
Acc. No.:	48.29





RASAMANJARI—'A BOUQUET OF DELIGHTS'

One of the great classics of Sanskrit literature is Bhanudatta's 15th century work, the *Rasamanjari*. This first folio contains an invocatory verse in honour of Shiva. The deity in the role of a lover, is portrayed in the *ardhanarishwara* form, the 'Lord whose half is woman'. The text says: 'Shiva looks at the uneven ground, hesitates, then extends his right foot. Roaming about in the forest, he plucks wild flowers. Relaxing in comfort on his bed [covered with] a tiger's pelt, he presses his beloved to his body's side…' Everything points to Shiva trying to save his beloved, his left female half which is Parvati, any unnecessary effort.

Not every painter who illustrated the *Rasamanjari* understood this, but this painter does, for Shiva is envisioned in his *ardhanarishwara* form, half-male, half-female. The painting is rich and colourful, with strong elements of stylisation, as seen in the treatment of rocks and flowering plants.

Provenance:	Sanskrit
Script:	Devanagari
Material:	Paper
Date:	18th century AD
Dimension:	14 cm × 29 cm
Acc. No.:	61.1185





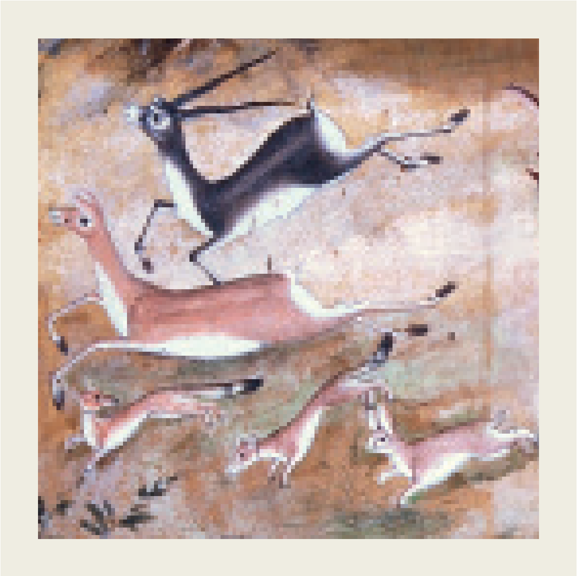
INSTALLATION OF THE PADUKAS OF RAMA

In the Ramayana, Bharatha implored Rama to return to Ayodhya and rule as king. Rama explains that he will uphold the promise his father made to mother Keikeyi and would only return after completing his 14 year exile. He commands Bharatha to return to Ayodhya and look after its people. Bharatha requests Rama for his *padukas* or wooden sandals, so that he could install them on the throne of Ayodhya and serve the people of Ayodhya, acting as a regent in the name of his elder brother, Rama. Bharatha did not live in the palace at Ayodhya but built for himself a hut outside the palace and passed the 14 years long exile like his brother, without any comforts of a prince. In this painting Bharata is shown clad in a deer skin, his head is covered like a prince from the hills, waving a flywhisk over Rama's *paduka's* that are placed on a throne with a *chattar* or canopy. The scene is set outside the town of Ayodhya, with many courtiers and ministers standing reverently, with folded hands.

Provenance: Guler, Pahari
Material: Paper
Date: Late 18th century
Dimension: 23 cm x 33 cm
Acc. No.: 88.529





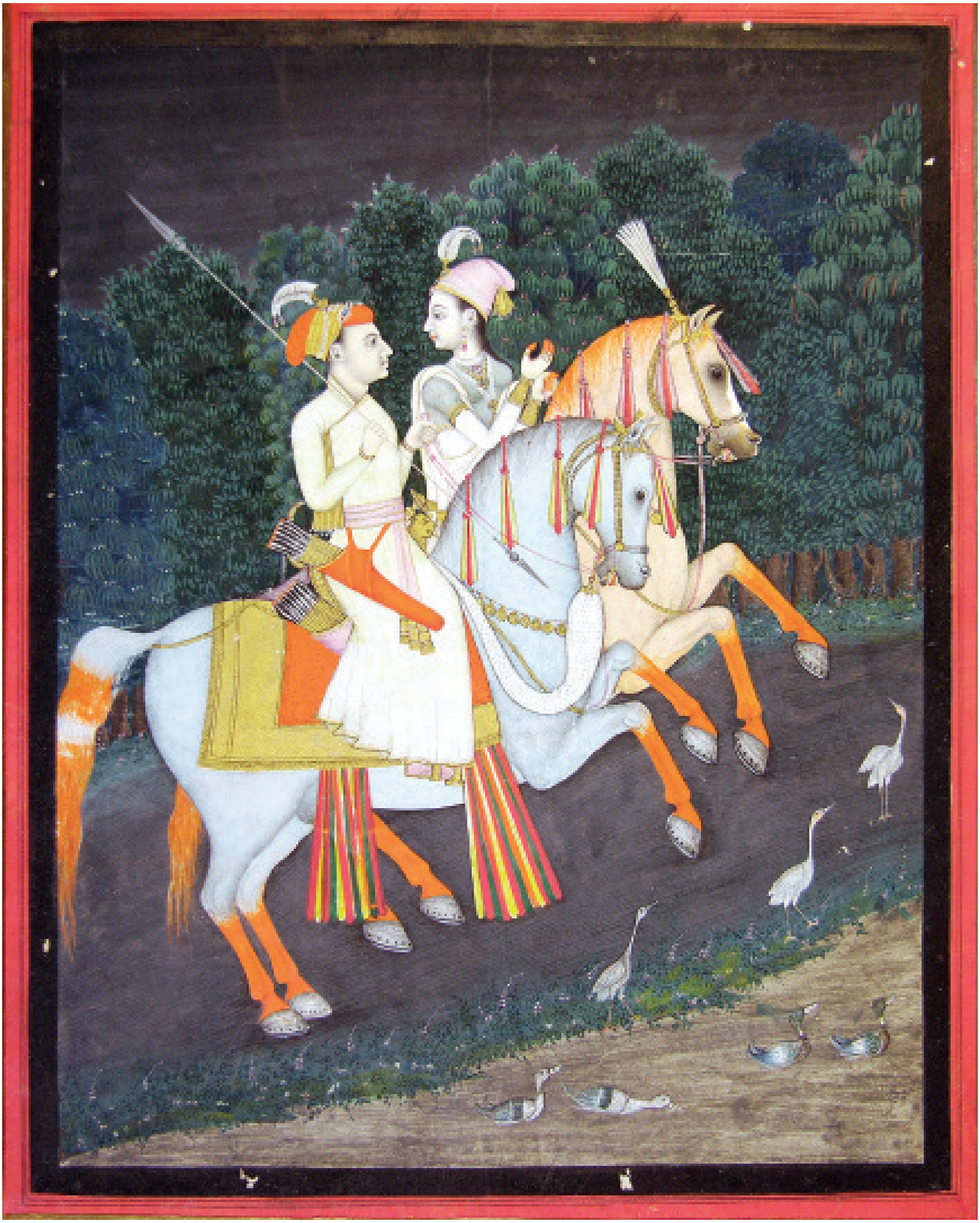


AKBAR HUNTING

Mughal Emperors inherited their passion for hunting from their Mongolian ancestors and spent much of their time hunting wild life in India. Babur took keen interest in this game and discussed various expeditions for wild animals and birds in his memoirs *Baburnama*. Abul Fazl writes in *Akbarnama* that when Humanyun re-entered Delhi after defeating the last Suri Sultan, on the very first day he, along with his 13-years-old son Akbar, went hunting. Bernier writes that in the neighbourhood of Agra and Delhi there was a long belt of uncultivated land which was protected for the royal hunt. Even at that early age Akbar enjoyed hunting and a full-fledged *Shikar Khana* (hunting department) was set up by him.

There are contemporary written and visual records to testify Akbar's enthusiasm for hunting. The unknown Mughal painter, depicts the young emperor riding a brown horse that he was fond of, and hunting in a dense forest full of wild animals.

Provenance: Mughal
Material: Paper
Date: AD 1590
Dimension: 23 cm x 19 cm
Acc. No.: BKN 8.15





BAZ BAHADUR AND RANI RUPMATI

The romantic legend of Sultan Baz Bahadur of Mandu and his beautiful Queen Rupmati has been immortalised in the songs of Ahmad-ul-Umri Turkman, in AD 1599, and became a favourite subject for the artists of the Mughal, Deccan, and Pahari styles. Baz Bahadur the handsome Sultan of Mandu sees Rupmati singing in the forest and falls in love with her. To win her hand in marriage he fights her father, Than Singh. The happily married king and queen spend their days in the forests of Mandu composing songs and singing. In this panting the richly dressed lovers ride on caparisoned stallions. The dark thick jungle and rivulet in the foreground successfully create a mystic atmosphere for the lovers. Unfortunately, their love lasted only seven years, as Baz-Bahadur was defeated by the invading army of Emperor Akbar under General Adham Khan. The General offers to marry the beautiful captive Rupmati but she refuses and drinks poison.

Provenance:	Bikaner, Rajasthan
Material:	Paper
Date:	Mid 18th century
Dimension:	25 cm x 1 cm
Acc. No.:	49.19/285



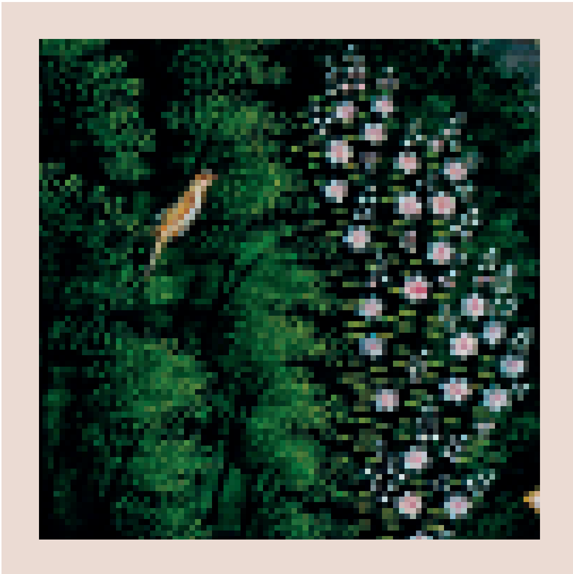


JAMBUDVIPA PATA

Jambūdvīpaprajñapti is the treatise on Jain cosmology that describes the 'Rose-apple Island'. *Jambudvipa* is an abstract representational map of the middle world—from where liberation from the cycle of rebirth is possible, a similar notion exists in Hinduism and Buddhism.

This diagram represents the *Jambu dvipa*—the island or continent of the rose-apple tree surrounded by *lavana samudra* or ocean, *with* Mount Meru at the centre. *Jambu dvipa* is divided into seven lands by six mountain ranges and the Ganges and the Sindhu (Indus) provide water to this region. Of the six mountains, three are regarded as the birth place of *Tirthankaras*. The south island is *Bharata* and *Airavata* is in the north. The most important islands of the middle world or *Madhya loka* are where humans reside, the *Urdhav loka* where the gods reside and *Adho loka* the infernal regions.

Provenance: Jain style, Western India
Material: Cloth
Date: Early 17th century
Dimension: 79.2 cm x 38.6 cm
Acc. No.: 62.3048



KRISHNA LOOKING INTO A MIRROR

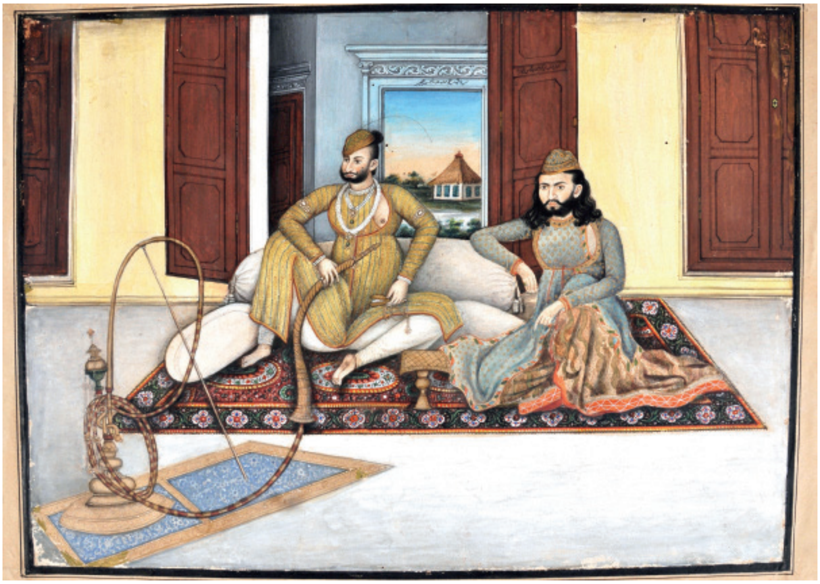
Keshvadas composed his famous poetry *Rasikapriya,* in Orchha, the capital of the Bundelas, of Central India. *Rasikapriya* is a kind of free-verse composition that inspired medieval miniature paintings. The essence of the poem is love and the relationship of the *nayaka* and the *nayika,* the hero and heroine.

This painting illustrates the *Prakasa Samyoga* that Kesavadasa describes as 'Love that is manifested or realised, when one sees its reflection in the mirror.' Keshvadasa writes of the divine couple were seated on the couch, engrossed in love, when Krishna reflects on the beauty of Radha in the mirror. He sees the red *bindi* on Radha's forehead, and is reminded of his previous birth as Rama and the *Agni Pariksha* or fire ordeal of Sita. The scene is depicted in this painting and set in the Garhwal landscape with flowering trees, hills bathed in sunrays and a lake with blooming lotuses and aquatics birds.

Provenance:	Garhwal, Pahari
Material:	Paper
Date:	Late 18th century AD
Dimension:	28.7 cm x 30 cm
Acc. No.:	61.908







NAWAB ABDUL REHMAN KHAN OF JHAJJAR, SMOKING HUQQA

The Nawab Abdul Rehman Khan and his companion are shown seated on a carpet resting against a big bolster. The golden *huqqa* is placed on a small blue carpet in front of them. One nawab is shown holding the pipe and other is waiting for his turn to smoke the *huqqa*.

Jhajjar was a small principality, 35 kilometres west of Delhi in the state of Harayana. Nawab Nijabat Ali Khan was awarded this principality by the British, for his help in the war. The inscription in Urdu above and below the painting identifies the two nawabs from Jhajjar, in typical Lucknawi attire.

Provenance: Awadh, Company period
Material: Paper
Date: Late 19th century
Dimension: 31.5 cm x 44 cm
Acc. No.: 76.561





RADHA AND KRISHNA PLAYING SHATRANJ (CHESS)

Keshvadasa of Central India composed his famous poetry *Rasikapriya* through which he explores the moods of love through the tale of Krishna and Radha. In this painting Radha's confidante asks her why she spent the entire day and night playing *Shatranj* or chess with Krishna; was she not aware of her mother's anger? However, it is evident from the picture that for Radha, the company of Krishna, was more important than the chess game or anything else.

The decorative interior architecture of the house is rendered in detail. Blue-bodied Krishna wears a white *jama*, a *pitambar* or yellow drape, a long garland of jasmine flowers and a royal turban. The bejewelled Radha is seated on the golden floor of the courtyard of the house. Radha's confidante stands outside the courtyard wall with folded hands looking at Radha, engrossed in the chess game. The garden full of flowers and the fountain are distinguishing features of this fine Bundi painting.

Provenance: Bundi, Rajasthan
Material: Paper
Date: AD 1700
Dimension: 38.3 cm x 25.5 cm
Acc. No.: 51.64/20



RAJA BHAGIRATHA PAYING HOMAGE TO LORD SHIVA

This miniature renders the Skanda Purana myth of *Gangavataran,* the descent of the Ganges (Ganga) from heaven to earth. On the right is King Bhagirath expressing his gratefulness to the great Lord for granting his prayer.

The Kangra artist shows Shiva's great vision of the journey of the Ganges flowing on to the earth from the Himalayas. The river flows by hills painted with saints, kings, sadhus, angels, men and women paying homage to Lord Shiva for gifting *Ganga jal*, the sacred water from the Ganges; the lifeline of millions of people and an inspiration and unifying force of Indian civilisation through the passage of time. Lord Shiva occupies a prominent place on a small island mound while Vishnu is seated on another island, admiring Shiva's great deed. Parvati with Karttikeya, Surya with golden halo, four-headed Brahma and Ganesha are also seated on small island floating on the silvery grey waters of Ganges.

Provenance:	Kangra, Pahari,
Material:	Paper
Date:	AD 1800
Dimension:	31 cm x 41 cm
Acc. No.:	61.904







SAGE ANGIRAS PAYING HOMAGE TO SAGE BHRIGHU

Sage Bhrigu and Angiras are considered the *manasputras* or mind children of Brahma—the Creator in Indian mythology. There is a popular belief that a work in Sanskrit on Hindu astrology entitled *Brighu-Samhita* was written by Sage Brighu. By referring to a particular horoscope one can know everything about the past, present and future from *Brighu-Samhita*. Sage Angiras is regarded as the initiator of the sacred rituals like *yajna* and sacrifices and a teacher of *Brahma vidya,* knowledge of the Absolute. He wrote the *Angiras Smrti,* the treatise on law as also on astronomy.

In this beautiful painting Sage Bhrighu is shown seated on a blackbuck skin in front of his hermitage. The sage is welcoming the guest Sage Angiras with a gesture of blessing. The hermitage is set within a colourful natural surrounding teeming with various species of domestic and wild animals.

Provenance:	Basohli–Mankot, Pahari
Material:	Paper
Date:	Mid 18th century
Dimension:	45 cm x 65 cm
Acc. No.:	61.106



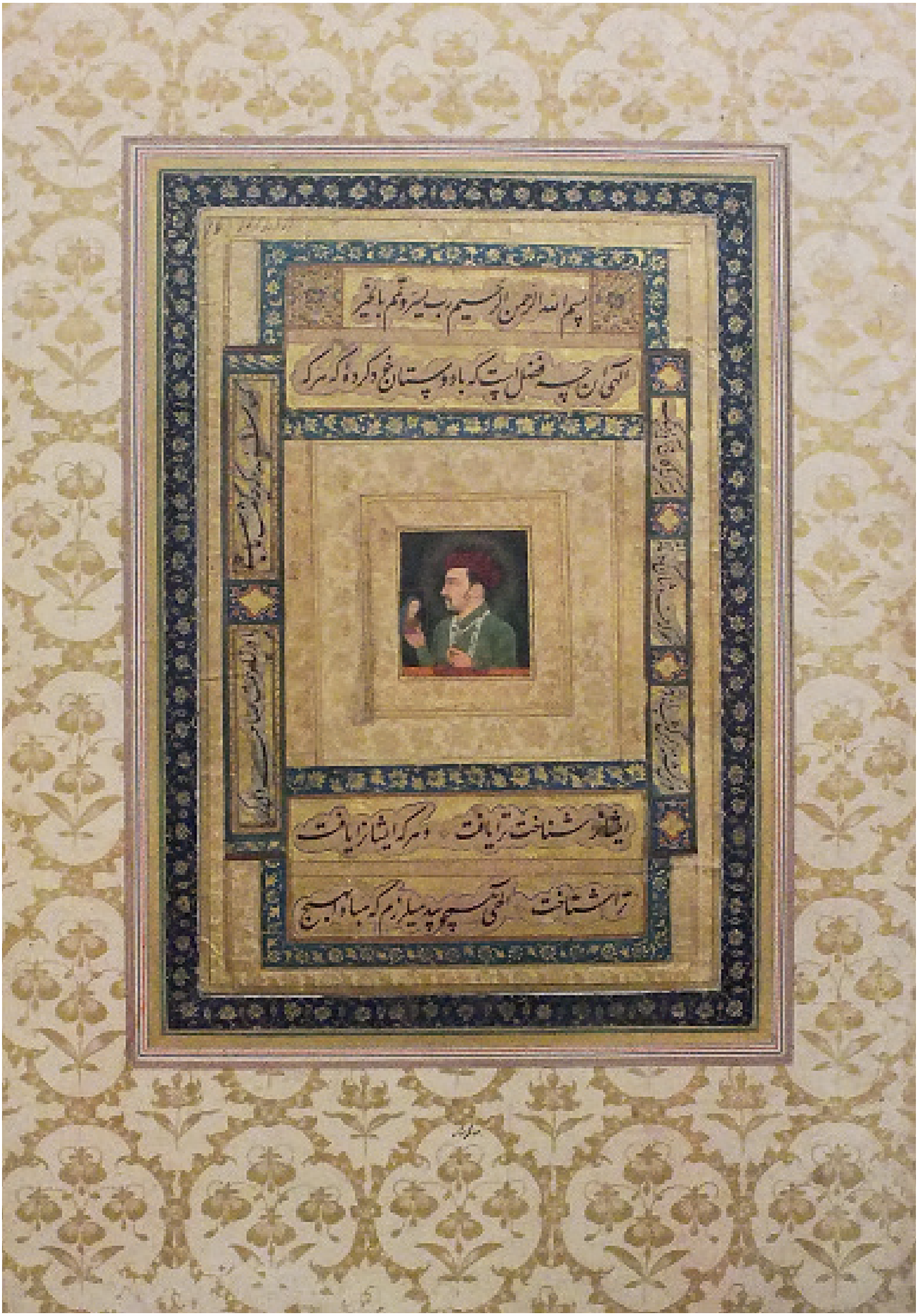


SHESHSAYI VISHNU WITH GODDESS LAKSHMI

In Indian thought the Supreme Being manifests in three cosmic roles, namely creation, sustenance and dissolution, represented by Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The *Puranic* literature tells the tales of Vishnu and his nine incarnations. While Vishnu creates and sustains creation and his consort Lakshmi or Sri brings riches, fertility and benefaction.

In this painting the Lord is painted reclining on the coils of the serpent *Shesha* and the elegant Goddess Lakshmi caressing her lord's feet with devotion. His vehicle the winged Garuda is standing in his attendance on his left. Four young boys are rendered with flywhisks and two angels are showering flowers from the sky. Sage Narada with his *veena* (a stringed musical instrument) is shown singing hymns in the praise of the lord. A king or maybe a patron is paying homage to *Sheshsayi* Vishnu and two other gods of the Trinity—the Brahma and the Shiva.

Provenance: Kotah, Rajasthan
Material: Paper
Date: AD 1780–90
Dimension: 43.5 cm x 31 cm
Acc. No.: 47.110/70



بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم



EMPEROR JAHANGIR

This portrait of the Moghul Emperor Jahangir (1605–1628), holding a picture of Madonna, is one of the best studies of the Emperor. Jahangir's interest in Christianity in well known. The border is decorated with floral designs executed in gold and with beautiful calligraphy in Nastaliq script. The art of painting in Jahangir's period was more refined and it reached the stage of excellence.

Provenance:	Mughal
Material:	Paper
Date:	AD 1620
Dimensions:	31 cm x 22.5 cm
Acc. No	58.58/31



در شکم او پیدا شده او را بیمار پسند بود اندیشناک گردید که حصار دروی محکم دارد ابواب مستحکم

دارد و در برج آن آسمان بروبان چندان محافظان جهان پاسبان مقیم دارد که شرح شمه آن

از اندیشه بیان افزون است و هر در با ده [illegible] قفل آهنی مستقل کرده ما در این [illegible]

[illegible] روز توکل علی الله پیری حصار [illegible] را در آغوش گرفته و امید [illegible] باشد

هول و باک [illegible] رسیده است چون قریب حصار که با در [illegible] راه که از آن [illegible]

بود [illegible] که [illegible] ابواب [illegible] منتظران [illegible] رو [illegible] گشاده انتظار مقدم

[illegible] آن [illegible] گرده [illegible] روان [illegible] شده [illegible] که [illegible] طلسمات

[illegible] نقش [illegible] معلوم [illegible] گرده [illegible] رسید بود ان

حالت [illegible] آورد که [illegible] عظیم است [illegible]



VASUDEVA CARRYING KRISHNA TO GOKULA

It had been predicted that King Kangsha, the ruler of Mathura, would die at the hands of his sister Devaki's eighth child, Krishna. In spite of strict vigilance, Vasudeva, Devaki's husband, escaped to Gokula from the prison, with the new-born Krishna, by crossing the flooded Yamuna during dark and stormy night.

The painting is divided into two parts. Above, inside the fort of Mathura are seen Devaki and another engaged in conversation on a pavilion surrounded by a large number of armed dozing soldiers. Below, Vasudeva with Child Krishna is crossing the river Yamuna. A part of the space is occupied by the Persian text beautifully written in Nastaliq script. The characteristic features of the painting are high turbans of the guards, the peculiar forms of stylised trees and the use of dark colours. This is an illustration to the *Bhagvata Purana.*

Provenance: Deccan
Material: Paper
Date: AD 1700
Dimensions: 27 cm x 37 cm
Acc. No.: 71.130

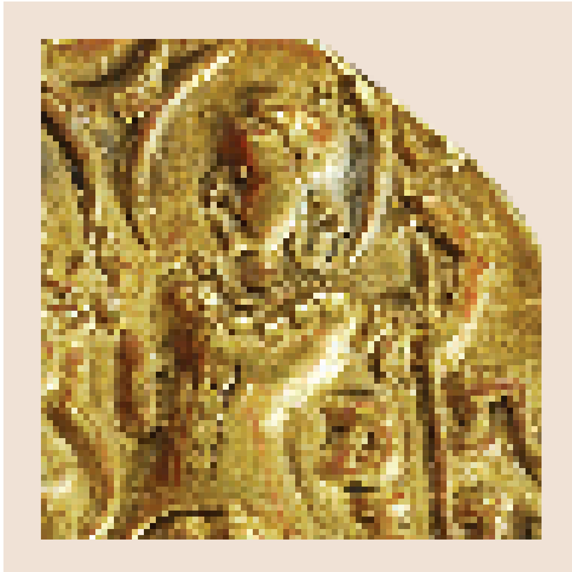




DECORATIVE ARTS

COINS, TEXTILES
ARMS, ARMOUR





GUPTA COIN

This gold coin is identified as belonging to the Gupta dynasty that ruled central and north India from the 3rd-5th century AD. The appearance and survival of gold coins of this era led to the dubbing of the Gupta period as the 'Golden Age' when the empire expanded and trade and commerce improved.

On the obverse side standing in the centre is a king and queen. The king appears to be offering a ring or a bangle-like object to queen. The names are in Brahmi—on the right is inscribed 'Chandragupta', and the name of queen is given on the left —'Sri Kumaradevi'.

On the reverse side of the coin in the centre is Goddess Durga seated on lion, holding a noose in her left hand and a cornucopia, or horn of plenty in her right hand.

Provenance:	Central India
Dynasty:	Gupta; Ruler: Chandragupta-I
Date:	AD 326–330
Material:	Gold
Dimension:	Diameter: 1.9 cm; Weight: 7.8 gm
Acc. No.:	51.50/1



MUGHAL COIN

This gold coin is identified as a *Mehrabi* and on the obverse it bears the date AH 981 Kalima and the names of four caliphs. On the centre of the reverse is written *Jalal al-din Muhammad Akbar Badshah Ghazi*; above: *Khallad Mulkahu*; below: *Zarb Baladah* Agra. This indicates that the coin was made in the Royal Mint in Agra in the reign of the Mughal Emperor Akbar. The Mughal coins are famous for their design and portraits of the emperors that so closely resemble and collaborate the painted portraits of these rules.

Provenance: Agra
Dynasty: Mughal; Ruler: Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar
Date: AH 963–1014 (AD 1556–1605)
Material: Gold
Dimension: 2.4 cm x 3.1 cm; Weight: 10.8 gm
Acc. No.: 60.1165/3546





KRISHNA AND RADHA

This intricately carved ivory image of Lord Krishna and Radha is an exceptional example of ivory carvers of 17th century of Odisha. Both the figures have been depicted like traditional Odishian dancers with sinuous movements of the body jewellery and attire. Similar to the henna coloured palms of a classical Odishian dancer, the palms and feet of ivory statues have also been painted in red colour. Carved in the round both Radha and Krishna stand in *tribhanga* pose, on raised inverted-lotus circular pedestals. Krishna is depicted as Venugopal (Gopal, name of Krishna, who holds the *venu* or a flute that is missing here). Both Radha and Krishna are beautifully adorned with jewellery items; a stylised crown, necklace, bangles armlets, waistband with tinkling bells. Radha's sharp nose, big eyes and tender smile adds to her charm and beauty. Such forms of the divine couple appear in *patachitras* or paper paintings and stone and wood carved images in Odisha.

Provenance:	Odisha
Material:	Ivory
Date:	17th century
Dimension:	Height: 27 cm; Width: 8.5 cm
Acc. No.:	64.251 and 64.252







HUQQA BASE DEPICTING PADMAVAT

Smoking the *huqqa* was a popular custom in Indian society in 18th and 19th century and gave artisans the opportunity to create *huqqas* of different materials; glass, clay, brass, copper, silver and bidri. An alloy of zinc, copper, lead and tin, Bidri was first fashioned into the requisite shape then its surface was decorated with silver and sometimes gold inlay work. In this *huqqa* base the inlay is used to illustrate 11 episodes from the *Padmavata*, a love story of Princess Padmavati and Prince Ratnasena, written by Malik Mohammad Jayasi in Hindi in the 16th century. The globular body of the *huqqa* base has been decorated with the narrative, the flowing water, fish and the bridge appear on the lower most portion while the birds and animals are on the shoulder of the *huqqa* base. The unusual theme and presentation on this 17th century *huqqa* base make it a very rare and important work of art.

Provenance: Hyderabad
Material: Bidri, inlayed with silver
Date: Late 17th–Early 18th century AD
Dimension: Height: 19.5 cm; Circumference: 50 cm
Acc. No.: 56.160/6





SURAHI

The *surahi* or decanter has a globular body with a long neck and was possibly used for serving wine. Such vessels are often seen in the Persian and Indian miniature paintings of 17th and 18th century. This outstanding example of jade *surahi* is decorated with diamond-shaped small jade pieces, outlined with gold wire. Each of the joints is beautifully decorated with a six-petal flower motif that has been worked with gold leaf and glass.

The neck portion of *surahi* is made of small rectangular jade pieces on which rows of the diamond design has been worked. A ring of red probably ruby stones, on the lower portion of neck enhance the charm of *surahi*. The small round opening, elongated neck and big bulbous base of *surahi* decorated with precious stones and gold makes an excellent example of the artistic work of the 18th century.

Provenance: Mughal
Material: Jade, gold wire and leaf, glass, ruby; carved, inlayed
Date: 18th century
Dimension: Width: 18 cm; Height: 19 cm
Acc. No.: 61. 503





PALLU OF A SAREE

This silk patola saree is one of its kind because of many unusual features i.e. field is done in double-ikat technique, while *pallu* (end panel) of saree has been woven in paithani *zari*-brocade style and the length of saree is also unusually long. All these features give the impression that it might have been made especially for some royal personality.

This is a fine example of 18th century patola tradition from Patan, the main production center of Gujarat. The saree is decorated with *ratan chok bhat buta* (jewel square design) in a red, yellow and white colour arranged systematically on the entire field. The pallu has been done with heavy brocaded plain *zari* field, which has floral creeper border. The vertical borders of the saree depict floral creeper with *zari* and silk threads in paithani-technique weaving of Maharashtra. Patola sarees usually have plain silk end panels, however, here the uses of *zari* brocade paithani *pallu*, and ornamented *zari* borders gives the impression that this saree is a custom-made object.

Provenance: Patola, Gujarat
Material: Silk and *zari*, woven with ikat and *zari* brocade
Date: 18th century AD
Dimension: Length: 936 cm; Width: 120 cm
Acc. No.: 69.113



SHAWL

The word shawl or *shal* (in Persian) is used for clothing loosely worn over the shoulders, upper body that covers the arms and also head of men and women. This cream coloured fine wool shawl has a plain field and artistically created end panels and narrow vertical *hashia* (border). This shawl is a very good example of the early style of *buta* (motif) composition and woven with the *kani* technique. A row of 21 poppy *butas* is artistically arranged on the *pallu* with *a* narrow floral border. The naturalistic movement of the poppy and leaves woven with red, yellow, green colours makes the *buta* very attractive. Narrow *hashia* on the borders, the speciality of 17th century shawl, illustrates the colourful floral creeper on a cream background. The shawl is a rare and early example of a 17th century shawl with a poppy *buta* and narrow border.

Provenance: Kashmir
Material: Wool
Date: Late 17th century
Dimension: 256.7 cm x 128 cm
Acc. No.: 59.304







QANAT (TENT) PANEL

The Mughal rulers were fond of floral patterns and such motifs are found on their costumes, architectural decorations and furnishings. Among the furnishing materials, floor spread and *qanat* (tent hanging), depicting floral pattern, are often found in 17th century miniature paintings. These tents were used by Mughal rulers for camping outdoors during festivities or war. Rare painted *qanats* are to be found in some museums around the world.

This beautiful *qanat* panel, depicts a large single plant with a triangular base, surrounded by a floral creeper under an ogival arch on cream background. The *qanat* has a broad border of floral and stylised leaf patterns on its. The use of red, green on a cream background makes the panel very colourful and would have created within the tent an atmosphere of an enchanted garden with framed views of plants and flowers.

Provenance:	Mughal
Material:	Cotton, printed and painted
Date:	17th century AD
Dimension:	223 cm x 175.5 cm
Acc. No.:	59.203/1





WAIST-COAT ARMOUR OF AURANGZEB

The waist-coat armour of Emperor Aurangzeb (who ruled from AD 1658 to 1707) is made of fine Damascus steel. It consists of two curved plates, moulded in the shape of a human torso, one for the front and the other for back. Both the plates are hinged together from the shoulders and the sides and are detachable. The top and the sides of the armour have three roundish cuts for the insertion of the neck and the two arms, respectively. On the lower part of the front-plate is a three-line inscription, the first two lines are in Arabic language, Naskh script, and reads: *La illaha illal Allaho, Muhammad Roasool Allaho* (there is no other God, but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet). While the third line is in Persian language and Nastaliq script and reads: *Shahanshah Aurangzeb Alamgir* (Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir). The lining of the armour is of yellow satin stuffed with cotton wool.

Provenance:	Delhi, Mughal,
Material:	Steel; Cotton wool
Date:	AD 1680
Dimension:	Height: 47.0 cm; Circumference: 120 cm
Acc. No.:	62.2883/2 & 3


56.17|1

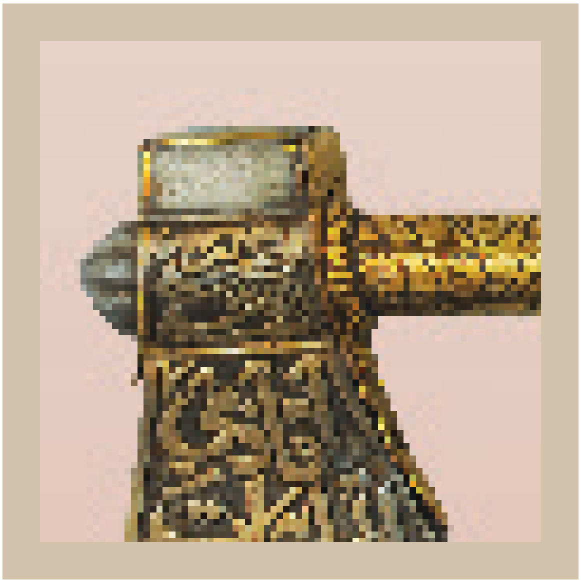


INSCRIBED SWORD OF TIPU SULTAN

This is a sword of historical value as it is the personal sword of Tipu Sultan, the ruler of Mysore (now Karnataka) of the closing years of the 18th century. Tipu Sultan is remembered for fighting against the British while defending his kingdom. The *Delhishahi* hilt with its circular disc pommel, oval grip, small knuckle-guard, short quillons and small langets, is damascened in gold with floral and creeper designs. The fine steel blade, is inscribed and bears verses from the Holy Quran along with the name of Tipu Sultan and his capital Serirangapatnam. The wooden sheath is covered with maroon velvet.

Provenance:	Srirangapattnam, Karnataka
Material:	Steel
Date:	AD 1790
Dimension:	Length: 74.1 cm
Acc. No.:	56.17/1





INSCRIBED BATTLEAXE OF NADIRSHAH

This is the personal battleaxe of Nadir Shah, who invaded India and ordered the massacre in Delhi in AD 1739. He is said to have looted the Mughal capital of all its riches, some of these treasures can be found in museums around the world. The sword is inscribed with verses from the Holy Quran, Nadir Shah's name and the title *Sahib-i-Qiran*. There are only three *Sahib-i-Qirans* in Mughal history namely Timur, Shah Jahan and Nadir Shah. The inscription is engraved in high relief on both sides of the blade and upon the socket in Persian language and Nastaliq script in gold plated. The octagonal handle is damascened in gold with floral and creeper designs in *tehnishan* style.

Provenance:	Delhi, Mughal, Indo-Persian
Material:	Steel
Date:	AD 1739
Dimension:	Length: 52 cm
Acc. No.:	58.47/3





INSCRIBED BOW OF BAHADUR SHAH II

This triple-curved bow is made of fine steel and belonged to Bahadur Shah II, the last ruler of Mughal dynasty. The bow is inscribed with his name and couplets in Urdu. The bow is beautifully damascened all over in gold.

Provenance:	Delhi
Material:	Steel
Date:	AD 1850
Dimension:	Length: 104.2 cm
Acc. No.:	59.2





CENTRAL ASIAN
ANTIQUITIES





CARAVAN SCENE

This rough sketch was done on paper in an amusing style to depict horses, camels and men, and the fourth animal in the line seems to be a rat. The double humped Bactrian camels were used on the arduous silk route as they were adapted to the varying temperature of the desert and their thick winter coat could cope up with the extreme desert cold. Furthermore camels are known to survive for a fortnight without additional water and are also able, according to many, to predict the desert winds. Camels, were however slow and were used mainly for carrying loads in hostile climates, in caravans. Horses were the preferable mode of transport for other purposes but often could not withstand the harsh desert conditions.

Provenance: Dunhuang
Material: Paper Painting
Date: 10th century AD
Dimension: 226 cm x 53 cm x 8 cm
Acc. No.: Ch.00388, (2003/17/343)



INDRA

This is a beautiful fragment of wall painting from Balawaste, with a crowned figure, kneeling down with hands in the gesture of adoration (*anjali mudra*). Lower part of the figure is missing. This figure has an aureole with flame border behind his head. On the right hand, at the back of the palm, an eye is drawn in black. On the basis of this representation, he has been sometimes identified as Indra. The painting shows an excellent blending of Sassanian and Indian (Ajanta) elements concerning colour scheme and linear treatment of volume.

Provenance:	Balawaste
Material:	Wall Painting
Date:	7th century CE
Dimension:	53.2 cm x 29.2 cm
Acc. No.:	Har. B (99/1/45)





AVALOKITESVARA

This is a fragment of a banner of Avalokitesvara and depicts the Bodhisattva with a richly ornamented crown with the Dhyani Buddha as the crest jewel. His right hand holds a willow spray. On the left of Avalokitesvara is an inscription in Chinese characters translated by Waley as: <BQ> 'Praise to the Great Merciful Compassionate Saviour from Pain, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. This image is offered on behalf of (my) departed parents. May their spirits be born in the Paradise (of Amitabha). May (my) journeying soon take me back to my native land and house. May my living friends and relations enjoy prosperity, peace, and comfort. May all living things in the realms of Dharma be soaked with (the dew of) good fortune. In the year (with the cyclical signs) *chia shen*, in the eleventh month, this pious work was completed.' <BQ> This has been dedicated (donated) by Chang Chung-hsin, 'the Buddhist disciple of pure faith, with whole heart'.

Provenance: Tun-huang, Gansu; China
Material: Silk Painting
Date: AD 865
Dimension: 74 cm x 59 cm
Acc. No.: Ch.00451 (2003/17/352)





LADY HORSE RIDER

This sculpture depicts a lady horse-rider of the T'ang period (AD 618–906.). She wears a high cap, tight fitting tunic and pants. She is riding a horse with stirrups. Her forehead is decorated with a beauty mark on the head. Horses played very important role in the Chinese history. At one point of time Chinese were paying heavily for strong West Asian horses, as the horses found in China were pygmy sized, heavy, and sluggish in movement. Hun attackers took advantage of the situation and after attacking and looting the Chinese dominion were able to escape swiftly.

China became enthralled by the majesty of horses that became a treasured animal, a status symbol and were often represented in Chinese art. Horse riding changed the dress style of Chinese soldiers as they laid aside their traditional dress and adopted high boots, baggy trousers and close-fitting tunic.

Provenance: Astana, Xinjiang; China
Material: Stucco, painted
Date: 7th–8th century AD
Dimension: 24.5 cm
Acc. No.: Ast.iii.2.016 and Ast.iii.2.022 (2003/7/1922)







PRE-COLOMBIAN AND WESTERN ARTS



PORTRAIT HEAD JAR

This head jar is made of natural brown clay with features like headdress and ornaments incised and painted in reddish brown and buff slips. Vessels in the likeness of human heads, slightly less than half natural size, with a wide opening in the top of the head as in this piece, frequently have so vivid a sense of observed reality that they appear to be portraits. Like other Mochica pots they are cast from moulds, with details added, painted and decorated, and baked to fix the colour and glaze. As grave offerings, portrait head pots, were a favourite subject of the fully developed Mochica culture, between AD 200 to 700.

Provenance:	Mochica, Peru
Material:	Clay
Date:	AD 200–700
Dimension:	Height: 16.5; Breadth: 16 cm
Acc. No.:	67. 246





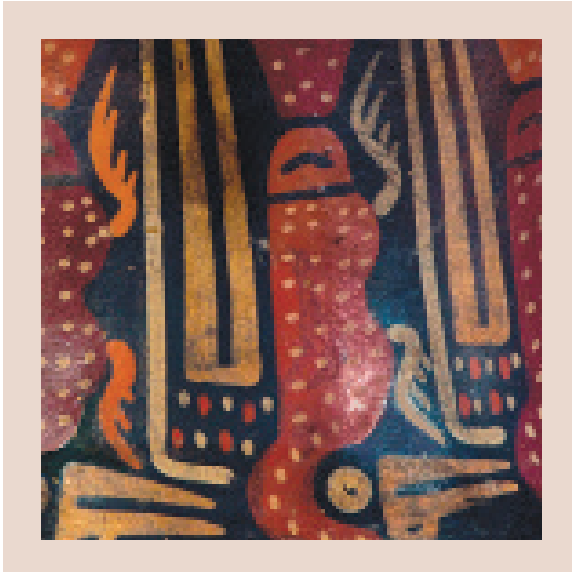
LARGE JAR

This large Nazaca spouted jar is in the shape of a seated man holding a human head. This jar is made of clay, with cream slip, of a stylised mythological creature holding a trophy head on one side with band of trophy heads, mask etc. A fillet is tied around his head dress and it is painted in light reddish brown, grey black. The Nazaca produced excellent pottery with a large range of rich colours, fine polish and decorative designs on its surface.

Provenance:	Nazca, Peru
Material:	Clay
Date:	AD 300–650
Dimension:	22.5 cm
Acc. No.:	67.291







DRINKING CUP

The drinking jar or cup is painted with a row of standing birds with wings outstretched. The spouts are important, as in Mochica pottery and as in some of the other cultures, in which 'blind' spouts and 'whistle' spouts had been developed. In the case of Nazcas pots the spouts were generally double spouts jointed by a modelled flat or rounded 'bridge' type of handle, wide mouthed bowls or bowls and Jars of various types and proportions are found as well. Nazca achieved great artistic and technical excellence in its pottery with its high temperature firing; it's use of rich colours, fine polish and skilled fitting of decorative designs in the space and form of the vessels.

Provenance: Nazca, Peru,
Material: Clay
Date: AD 300–650
Dimension: Height: 10.2 cm; Diameter: 14.2 cm
Acc. No.: 67.313





HUMAN FIGURE

This dark grey figure of Maya is of elegant form and is characteristic of grave offerings in the cemetery of the Island of Jaina, off the west Coast of Yucatan. The two advanced cultures of this region are best known as the Mayan and the Aztec. The Mayan culture was famous for their architectural achievements in constructing great pyramidal monuments, and also their painted murals, clay vessels and figures in various styles, in writing, perfecting mathematical notations and calculations, in devising a complicated dating system and in working out an extraordinarily accurate calendar that amazed the Spaniards who invaded their lands in the 16th century. This sculpture shows a seated human figure wearing a high headdress with his arms resting on his knees.

Provenance:	Maya, Mexico
Material:	Dark grey stone
Date:	AD 500–900
Dimension:	Height: 48 cm
Acc. No.:	67.416



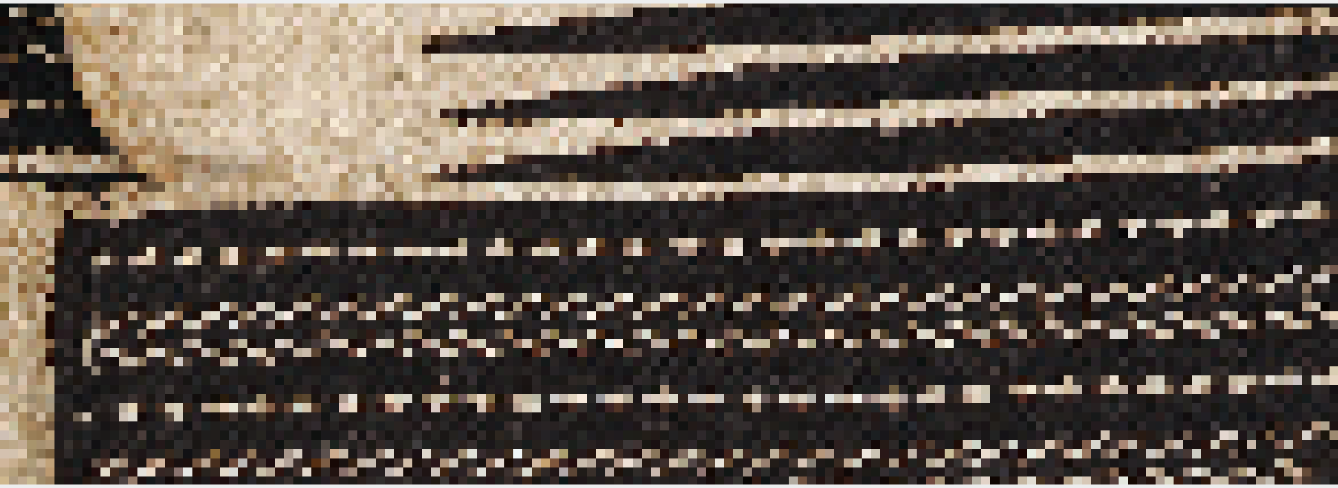
LARGE HUMAN HEAD

The large human head is made of clay with a spiked headdress held by a strap. Some of the spikes and the right ear are missing and the left ear has a decorative ring. The face is broad with prominent features under the beautiful headdress. The people of the Gulf of Mexico region continued the high level of artistic expression that characterised the early La Venta culture, into historic times. The Totonacs of the central coast of the Gulf of Mexico, and this terracotta 'Human Head' and the finely carved stone Yokes, Palms and Axes, of ceremonial significance, are some of the notable examples of the distinctive art work in both clay and stone in the National Museum pre-Columbian collection from South America.

Provenance:	Vera Cruz, Mexico
Material:	Clay
Date:	AD 500–900
Dimension:	19.3 cm
Acc. No.:	67.467







ANTHROPOLOGY
COLLECTION



EAR DECORATION

A stylised, semi-circular, fan-shaped ceremonial ear decoration made of blue feathers, bark-dyed yellow and red coloured wool, supported by two wooden stalks. This intricately designed ear decoration with bright colours was worn as part of the dance costume by the Kabui Naga. The colourful ear embellishment reminds us of the fan-shaped ear decoration of the 'Monpa' wooden mask, for the 'Thutotdam' dance of Arunachal Pradesh.

Provenance: Kabui Naga, Manipur
Material: Grass, feather, wool, bark
Date: 20th century
Dimension: Diameter: 11.5 cm (approx.)
Acc. No.: 64.1541





COMB

This is a rectangular, stylised, carved wooden comb with tiny metallic equestrian figures of warriors, probably jousting with each other, on the crest of the comb. The comb was given as a gift from the girl (*motiari*) to the boy (*chelik*), during their period of stay in the *ghotul* or youth dormitory, where it is customary for them to stay together, before they give their consent to marry each other.

The comb is usually worn by the male members of the community. The motifs on the comb are symbols of vigour and are also believed to empower the wearer with magical powers and protect him from evil forces and calamities. It was considered a taboo, to use someone else's comb, since it is believed that this might cast an evil spell on the person, who does so.

Provenance: Bastar, Madya Pradesh
Material: Wood, alloy
Date: 20th century
Dimension: Length: 13 cm (approx.)
Acc. No.: 64.1642







BHAIRON DEV

This is a manifestation of Lord Shiva in his ferocious 'Bhairon' form, flanked by two unidentified crowned figures holding attributes, seated on his shoulders. It is a metallic sculpture cast in *dhokra* tradition or lost-wax process and depicts a stylised, horned deity with elongated ears, half-shut eyes, heavy lips, extra-long legs and folded arms. The horns on the head, perhaps symbolise Shiva's bull 'Nandi'. This iconic image is supposed to fight the demons with its associated supernatural powers, thus protecting the village from evil spirits.

Provenance: Bastar, Madhya Pradesh
Material: Bronze
Date: 20th century
Dimension: Length: 29.7 cm; Width: 9.7 cm (approx.)
Acc. No.: No. 87.647





RITUAL POT (AMBROSIA)

This ritual container has a detachable lid and two handles on either side. The holy pot is studded with semiprecious stones, and decorated with floral and ritual motifs in high relief. The pot was probably meant to store holy water, during ritual ceremonies and prayers in Buddhist chapels and monasteries.

Provenance:	Tibet
Material:	Metal, Semiprecious stones
Date:	20th century
Dimension:	19 cm x 16.5 cm (approx.)
Acc. No.:	94.115/1-2



WAR COAT

This is a traditional *mega*, a sleeved, high-neck embroidered coat, with black and white geometrical patterns, woven from nettle, fibre and human hair. It is worn by male members of the Idu Mishmi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. The very thick and coarse texture of the coat serves as a defensive covering against arrow attacks, and hence its name—war coat.

Provenance: Arunanchal Pradesh
Material: Bark, fibre, human hair and cotton
Date: 20th century
Dimension: 63.8 x 47.4 cm approx
Acc. No.: 64.745







AJIT MUKERJEE
COLLECTION



KRISHNA IN COSMIC FORM (VISVARUPA)

The painting shows Krishna in cosmic form of Visvaraupa. One important episode in Krishna's life is described in the Bhagavad Gita. It does not fit two comfortably with the rest of the story, but it has been incorporated into the later texts, and corresponds very well with tantric images of the cosmic body during a great war when Krishna was serving as chariot driver to Arjuna. He had occasion to help Arjuna over moral difficulties in connection with his military duty; he was finally persuaded by Arjuna to demonstrate his own divinity by showing himself in his cosmic form.

This vision of Krishna as Supreme Being, which he showed to Arjuna, embracing the whole of reality, became the subject of a great many icons designed to help devotes to attain a similar vision for them.

Provenance: Rajasthan
Material: Painting, gouache on paper
Date: 18th century AD
Dimension: 34.5 cm x 53.5 cm
Acc. No.: 82.444





BHUVANESHWARI YANTRA

The painting shows Bhuvaneshwari yantra, one of the goddesses of Tantrika, the ten Mahavidya. The goddess is shown in her aspect as Lord and ruler of the universe. There is thus 'in existence' of the first stage of creative evolution a dot inside a downward pointing triangle. The next stage consists in the generation by this couple of four pairs of triangles, each pair having one pointing up, the male, the other down, the female. The innermost dots inside, represent the yantra of Bhuvaneshwari.

Provenance: Rajasthan
Material: Painting on paper
Date: 18th century AD
Size: 33 cm x 27 cm
Acc. No.: 82.407


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JOJI (CAP)

This cap, which is also a part of the 'Peshwaj', is an oval headdress, tapering in a tail-like projection, broad at the top and gradually narrowing down, resembling a hooded cobra. It is decorated with sequins and beads. The 'Joji' is worn along with the 'Peshwaj', as a full marriage costume.

Provenance: Himachal Pradesh
Material: Silken cloth, beads and threads
Date: 20th century
Dimension: Length: 37cm; Width: 11cm (approx.)
Acc. No.: 59.213/11







SABDAG––THE LORD OF SOIL

It is a ritual image of Sabdag—the local guardian deity of the mountains, consisting of a large golden plated metallic skull and a detachable trident of iron, depicting blazing flames. The skull represents the ferocious form of Lord Shiva, i.e. Bhairava. It is marked with a cranial suture and has a slit at the apex to fix the trident. The trident and the flames are symbolic of the energy stored in Lord Shiva. These kind of iconic images can be visualised on the roof tops of monasteries, securing protection against evil spirits and demons that pollute the earth air and water. They are also supposed to ward off all evil from a holy site.

Provenance: Spiti Valley, Himachal Pradesh
Material: Metal
Date: Early 20th century
Dimension: Length: 43 cm; Width: 92 cm (approx.)
Acc. No.: 91.139





CEREMONIAL DOLLS

These are polished stylised male and female dolls, usually attached to gongs. Each gong is a single piece of wood, hollowed out in the middle with a carved beak-like structure at one end and the other continues into a flat strip with a gap in the centre. This slot supports the wooden figure, which is fitted into the gap, in an erect posture, with the help of a wooden pin.These gongs are usually carried over the shoulders by the Muria Gond tribals of Bastar, during the festive occasions, such as the 'Chherta' festival.

Provenance:	Bastar, Madhya Pradesh
Material:	Wood
Date:	20th century
Dimension:	Length: 64.1405; Height: 39.0cm (approx.)
	Length: 64.1406; Height: 41.0cm (approx.)
Acc. No.:	64.1405 and 64.1406



SAROD-TYPE STRING INSTRUMENT

This is a string instrument, very similar to the contemporary Sarod, and can be seen in sculptures and mural paintings in old caves and temples in various parts of India. It has a gourd resonator, metallic fingerboard and a rear part with strings holding pegs. Such instruments are also visible in sculptures dating back to the 2nd century BC from Bharhut and Sanchi; a Gandhara stone relief panel from 3rd cent BC etc. A musician holding such an instrument is seen above the statue of 'Varaha' in the Udaigiri caves near the stupa at Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh (as mentioned by Smt. Sharan Rani Backliwal in her book entitled 'The Divine Sarod').

Over the centuries, developments took place in the ancient 'Sarod-type' instrument, from which the contemporary day Sarod was evolved, with modifications in the instrument and in the style of playing, by the legendary musician 'Baba' Ustad Allauddin Khan.

Provenance: Gujarat /Rajasthan (Border Area)
Material: Metal finger board, gourd resonator
Date: 18th century AD
Dimension: Length: 153 cm (approx.)
Acc. No.: M.03/128



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